Classroom Teachers' Perceptions of and Attitudes Towards the Social Studies Course

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to determine how the attitudes and perceptions of classroom teachers towards social studies lesson affect those of the students towards the same lesson and to develop suggestions about social studies lesson. Social studies classes, which aim to bring up active citizens by helping them attain three of its most important objectives: rights, freedoms and democracy qualities, are first introduced to students in primary schools by primary school teachers. In this kind of lesson, primary school teachers' attitudes towards and perceptions of the lesson play a key role in terms of students who are the basis of posterity. In this regard, this study was carried out to indicate the importance of how primary school teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards social studies lesson affect students' attitudes towards this lesson. The present study aimed to examine primary school teachers' perceptions of and attitudes towards the social studies lesson and students' attitudes towards social studies lesson in terms of various factors and to study how this affects students' attitudes. This study was conducted by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, and it adopted a multi-staged mixed method design to explore the relationship between various factors and aspects. To collect quantitative data, "social studies attitude scale for students", "social studies attitude scale for teachers" and "social studies self-efficacy scale for teachers" were used. To collect qualitative data, an interview protocol consisting of 18 questions with follow-up questions was used. The sample of the study consisted of 267 5th graders, and the study group consisted of 21 primary school teachers. SPSS 21 was used to calculate descriptive analyses, correlation analyses and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) while analyzing quantitative data. In qualitative data analysis, Nvivo 10.0 was used. The results indicated that primary school teachers’ attitudes towards social studies lesson, and their competence are above the average. It is concluded that there is a positively significant relationship between primary school teachers' attitudes, perceptions and students' attitudes towards social studies lesson, students' achievements and the teachers' self-efficacy in the social studies lesson.

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Keywords: social studies, attitude, primary school teachers, self-efficacy
Introduction

People who exist in society and are constantly confronted with different events and make effort to transform knowledge into skills to adapt to life (Demirel, 2005: 41). This effort to meet the needs of people and societies is provided and shaped through education (Arslan & Demirel, 2007: 199).

With the economic and technological advancements in the world, the purpose of education has been reshaped based on incessantly evolving needs. Since there is a continuous change in the world, expectations from education have changed and transformed over time, and raising individuals who can adapt to developments and are open to innovations has become one of the main objectives of education and training activities (Mentiş-Taş, 2004: 29). To this end, the general understanding of education has also changed. With these changes, it is no longer critical to take information directly from someone else, but to acquire the methods of reaching it. With this changing perspective, different arrangements have been made on education programmes all over the world. Now, instructional activities tend to focus on teaching knowledge in a way to be structured by the individual in his/her mind (Akdağ & Çoklar, 2009: 2).

As the rest of the world, our country has also entered into the wheel of change that has made itself clear through revised education programmes, and it aims to educate its citizens in line with the newly prepared curricula (Doğanay, 2008: 94). Social studies curriculum is one of the revised curricula (Sidekli, 2010: 3). In the programmes organised based on the constructivist approach, students themselves reveal their unique concepts and produce solution alternatives for the problem. Thus, the teaching environment is structured in a way to support the active participation of the student. In this approach, there have been significant changes in the role of the teacher in the teaching environment. It is seen that the teacher now holds a valuable position that not only conveys information but also ensures effective communication and establishes an effective learning environment in the classroom and guides the practices (Aykaç, 2007: 20).

In this context, we can explain the teacher roles as follows. The teacher:

- Encourages students to be curious.
- Focuses on being creative, thinking critically and analysing.
- Puts learning by doing and experiencing at the centre of the education and training processes.
- Offers and implements activities that require problem solving, so that the students can have one-to-one experience with real life.

Based on the teacher roles presented above, it is seen that one of the most basic conditions for attaining cognitive goals in a constructivist social studies programme or course is to achieve various affective goals. In line with the social studies programme, it is necessary to increase and encourage students' interest in the course to develop solutions to social and individual problems. Directing student interest to the course is ensured by use of the senses (Karasakaloğlu & Saracaloğlu, 2009: 347). In line with the above-mentioned teacher roles of the social studies programme, the teacher is seen as the most important element in terms of directing student interest to the lesson and ensuring the success of the programme. In this respect, the teacher should fulfil his/her role effectively (Aydın, 2012: 17-18). Among the aims of social studies lessons and those of teachers who perform their duties effectively are helping the students acquire the skills of problem solving, decision making, acquiring knowledge, using knowledge analytically, analysing beliefs and values, and taking an active role in society as an
individual equipped with knowledge and skills (Gömleksiz & Cüro, 2011: 100-101). In this context, the success of a social studies course, which is included in the primary school curriculum to achieve such important objectives, depends mostly on the teacher. In this regard, the teacher assumes a critical role as the implementer of the programme (Yılmaz & Şeker, 2011: 44). Students often dislike and find social studies classes boring due to their content and the teaching methods used by teachers, and developing a positive attitude towards this course depends on the behaviour of the teacher in the classroom and the active participation of the students in the lesson. To achieve this, the teacher must possess the characteristics of an effective teacher and must adopt a positive attitude towards the course (Çelebi, 2006: 40). If the teacher considers the social studies course exciting, students will be more willing to learn the topics of the course. If the teacher expects the students to demonstrate good citizenship skills, the students are likely to behave in a particular way. An effective teacher is enthusiastic, and this is truly reflected in the classroom, in which the students will be more enthusiastic and excited about the lesson. In other words, an unwilling teacher cannot teach social studies efficiently (Ulu-Kalın & Topkaya, 2017: 16). In this context, the behaviour of the teachers who teach the social studies course in the classroom has a great impact on the students as well as their positive attitudes towards the course. It is inevitable that this effect will affect the competencies of the teachers who teach the social studies course and their attitudes towards the course, to determine how the attitudes of these teachers towards the course affect those of the students towards this course, and finally to reveal how attitudes and competencies towards this course affect academic achievement.

Significance of the Study

The most important element of the education system in a country is probably teachers, who are the implementers of the system. The more specialised teachers are in their fields, the higher the success of the education system could be (Kazazoğlu, 2011: 8). Primary education is the most important phase in the whole education process of individuals. It assumes an important role in terms of the tasks that the individual will undertake in adult life. The responsibility of the efficient transfer of this role to students rests with classroom teachers working in primary schools (Erdoğdu, 2007: 34-37). The knowledge and skills of teachers directly affect the behaviour of students (Dilekmen, 2008: 214). The ability of students to take an active place in society as individuals equipped with knowledge and skills in the future could be realised by attaining the objectives of the social studies course.

In this context, students' positive development of their feelings and attitudes towards the course to achieve the objectives of the social studies course promotes effective learning and helps increase their success in that course (Ergin, 2006: 25). Thus, it ensures that the function of social studies education is realised in a more permanent way (Ulu-Kalın & Topkaya, 2017: 16). Negative attitudes, on the other hand, affect learning negatively and reduce student success (Ergin, 2006: 25).

Affective issues have as important a place in social studies instruction as cognitive domain. Since students' attitudes begin to be shaped at an early age, it assumes an important role in
developing positive attitudes towards the social studies course during primary education. Being aware of students’ attitudes towards the social studies course in advance can help prevent negative attitudes. This is because it is often possible to alter negative attitudes. Social studies course consists of information that is gradually built on previously acquired knowledge. This may lead to negative attitudes towards this course, along with negatively affecting success and attitudes of students in higher grades.

In this context, if the attitudes and behaviour of teachers who teach the social studies course are positive, it is important in terms of raising students who easily attain the objectives related to the key themes of the course, such as national consciousness, rule of law, empathy, human rights, democracy, republic, national sovereignty, national economy, Turkish culture and history, geographical characteristics of the environment and historical process.

This study is critical in terms of determining how the perceptions and behaviour of classroom teachers who teach the social studies course affect the students' perceptions of and attitudes towards the social studies course, along with revealing the factors that cause these effects.

Research Questions

This study seeks to find answers to the following overall research questions: Are the perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of classroom teachers towards social studies course have an impact on students' attitudes towards the course? Do they have an impact on the attitudes of fifth grade students towards the social studies course? and which factors are at work in shaping the attitudes of classroom teachers towards the social studies course? Based on these global research questions, the following specific questions were determined, and answers were sought in the study.

a) What is the level of efficacy of primary school classroom teachers in teaching social studies course?

b) Do the attitudes of primary school classroom teachers towards social studies course play a role on the students' attitudes towards social studies course?

c) How do primary school classroom teachers' attitudes towards social studies course affect students' academic achievement in the social studies course?

d) How do primary school classroom teachers' attitudes towards social studies course affect their competences in the course?

e) What are the attitudes of primary school classroom teachers towards the social studies course?

f) Do the attitudes of primary school fifth grade students towards social studies course differ based on their level of success in the course?

Method
Research Design

This research study aimed to investigate the perceptions and attitudes of classroom teachers towards the social studies course, along with students’ attitudes towards this course and how the teachers' self-efficacy, perceptions, attitudes and behaviour affect the students in terms of academic achievement. In deciding on the method to be applied for the research, the researchers considered the question of how to best investigate the impact of classroom teachers on the students' attitudes towards the social studies course.

Since our research progressed by building on the findings and results obtained in the previous stages in line with its longitudinal nature, with numerous stages, a multi-stage mixed methods design was used.

Mixed-methods research requires combining or integrating qualitative and quantitative research and their data in a study. The importance of these multiple methods, which are characterised as mixed methods, is based on the idea that their deficiencies can be overcome by combining quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell 2013: 215).
The multi-stage research, one of the mixed-methods design, provides the flexibility required during the implementation of the mixed method design elements required to address a series of interrelated research questions (Creswell & Clark, 2015: 108). Figure 1 illustrates the process diagram of the method.

**Population and Sample**

Since the research was conducted using a multi-phase mixed-methods design, the selection of the population and sample for the quantitative phase and the determination of the study group for the qualitative phase are explained below.

**Quantitative Phase**

The population is the group that has common characteristics within the research study and to which the results obtained are to be generalised. The population can cover very large areas, or it can be narrowed when desired. The sample, on the other hand, is a set of elements selected by any method suitable for the purpose of the study within the research population and representing it (Creswell, 2017: 189).

The population in the present study consists of 4299 fifth grade students studying at the city centre and in the villages of Sivas province and 229 classroom teachers who teach 4th grades in primary education institutions. The sample of the research consists of 21 classroom teachers and 267 fifth grade students selected by stratified random sampling method. To generalise the results of the research to the population, classroom teachers and students working in primary and secondary schools serving together were sampled by stratified sampling method.

Classroom teachers working in schools were first determined by stratified sampling and then by simple random sampling method. In simple random sampling method, everyone has an equal probability of being selected in the population and the selection of one individual does not affect the selection of others (Creswell, 2017: 190).

**Qualitative Phase**

Another type of sampling used in selecting the sample of the study is criterion sampling. The study group of the research consists of 21 classroom teachers selected by criterion sampling (Patton, 2014: 235) out of 1316 classroom teachers working in primary and secondary schools serving in the same building or campus of the Ministry of National Education in the centre and villages of Sivas province. Criterion sampling is the study of all situations that meet a set of criteria predetermined by the researcher (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016: 122). In this type of sampling, sampling is done based on certain criteria. With this sampling method, teachers of primary and secondary schools serving in the same building were included in the study group. The rationale behind including this criterion was to reveal how the students who completed the first level of primary education and continued their education in the second level in the same school were affected.
Participants
The participants of the research are the fifth-grade students studying in the centre and villages of Sivas province and the teachers who taught the fourth grades.

Data Collection Tool
Since the present research is a mixed-methods study, different data collection tools were used for the quantitative and qualitative phases. The data collection tools used in the research are explained below.

Quantitative Phase

Personal Information Form
In this study, two different personal information forms were used by the researcher to collect demographic data. First, a form consisting of 7 questions was used to collect demographic data about the students, and this form was attached to the social studies course attitude scale. This section sought information about the following: age, gender, family income, parents' educational background status, social studies course grade at the end of the first semester and the teacher's name who taught the participant during the fourth grade. Second, a form consisting of 7 questions was used to collect demographic data about the participating teachers, and this form was attached to the social studies course attitude scale. This section sought information about the following: age, gender, educational background, professional experience (seniority), school location, faculty the participant teacher graduated, and field of study at high school.

Attitude Scale for Social Studies Course
In this study, two different attitude scales were administered to investigate the attitudes of the students and teachers towards social studies course.

First, the Attitude Scale for social studies class developed by Demir and Akengin (2010) was administered to the 5th grade students. There are 25 questions intended to evaluate the students’ attitudes. The scale was composed of four sub-dimensions: love of social studies, attitudes shaped by the teacher, enjoyment in social studies course and desire to learn topics in social studies. Likert-type items included five points: "completely agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree".

Reliability and construct validity
Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient for the whole social studies Course Attitude Scale was 0.932. The Spearman-Brown internal consistency coefficient calculated by dividing the test into two equal parts was 0.931, and the Guttman internal consistency coefficient was 0.930. These statistics globally suggested that the Social Studies Course Attitude Scale was a reliable tool.

As a result of confirmatory factor analysis, standardized RMR, comparative fit index (CFI) and relative fit index (RFI) were found to be 0.082, 0.99 and 0.92, respectively. The results were nearly perfect fit values. Moreover, goodness of fit index (GFI) 0.80 and adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) 0.76 show that the values are within acceptable limits.

Social Studies Attitude Scale for Teachers
In the quantitative phase of the study, the Social Studies Course Attitude Scale was administered not only to students but also to classroom teachers. The Social Studies Course Attitude Scale, developed by Demir and Akengin (2010) was applied to the classroom. The scale consists of 20 questions that belong to three dimensions: being fond of social studies course, willingness to teach social studies course and love of social studies. Likert-type items included five points: "completely agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree". In the statistical analysis of the obtained data, 1 point was assigned to "Strongly Disagree", 2 points to "Disagree", 3 points to "Undecided", 4 points to "Agree", and 5 points to "Strongly Agree".

The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient for the whole social studies course attitude scale administered to the teachers was found to be 0.940. The Spearman-Brown internal consistency coefficient calculated by dividing the test into two equal parts was 0.939, and the Guttman internal consistency coefficient was 0.936. These statistics globally suggest that the scale is reliable enough.
Teacher Self-Efficacy Form

In the teacher self-efficacy form, there were 18 items consisting of 5-point Likert type statements intended to determine the competences of classroom teachers with respect to social studies course. The five points were "very good level, good level, medium level, poor level, insufficient level". In the statistical analysis of the data obtained, for each item, 1 point was assigned to "Inadequate Level", 2 points to "Weak Level", 3 points to "Moderate Level", 4 points to "Good Level", and 5 points to "Very Good Level".

Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was found 0.854, and the Spearman-Brown internal consistency coefficient calculated by dividing the test into two equal parts was 0.719. Finally, the Guttman internal consistency coefficient was 0.706. These results globally suggested that the scale was reliable.

Qualitative Phase

In the study, a semi-structured interview form was prepared and used by the researchers as one of the data collection tools to explore the thoughts of classroom teachers about the social studies course. To clarify the issues that need to be explored, a semi-structured interview was preferred in the research.

The semi-structured interview protocol was developed by the researchers in line with the research questions, along with data from the studies that emerged in the literature review. Expert opinion was also sought to ensure consistency in the research. This also helped ensure internal validity in the research. The interview questions and the data obtained in the pilot application were analysed by a field expert, and necessary revisions were made in the interview protocol in the light of the feedback given. Expressions that were not fully understood by the teachers during the pilot application phase were also revised. For example, when the teachers were asked the question "How do you feel while teaching the social studies course?", their facial expressions indicated that they could not answer the question. They were not sure about how to respond to this. Following the revisions made with the help of expert opinion, the final version of the interview form was prepared.

Data Analysis

The process of analysing the data collected in quantitative and qualitative phases is explained below.

Quantitative Phase

In the quantitative phase of the research, normality tests were conducted by considering kurtosis and skewness coefficients before the data analyses. Normality tests revealed that parametric tests could be conducted on the data since it was understood that the data were normally distributed. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 21 was used for the data analysis. Descriptive statistics were calculated to determine the attitudes and competences of the participant teachers in the social studies course. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analyses were conducted to determine how the classroom teachers' attitudes towards the social studies course affected the students' attitudes towards the social studies course and their academic achievement. Spearman Rank Difference Correlation analysis was carried out to determine how the classroom teachers' attitudes towards social studies course affected their competences. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test, a parametric test, was conducted to determine whether the attitudes of the fifth-grade students towards the course differed based on their success in the course. To determine which groups significantly differed from each other, Scheffe test was used. The results of the analysis are presented in the findings section in tables.

Qualitative Phase

To collect qualitative data, face-to-face interviews with classroom teachers were conducted in the teachers' rooms, meeting rooms and empty classrooms. In the interviews, voice recordings were created by obtaining the voluntary permission of the participants. The interviews varied between 20 to 30 minutes. The data obtained from the voice recordings were transcribed into written documents. The raw data were analysed using Nvivo 10.0, which is a
program that helps edit, organise, compare, group, match and analyse qualitative data (Bazeley & Jackson, 2015: 2). After the answers received through the interviews with the participants, codes were created to facilitate the analysis of the data. The interview data were coded by the researchers and the field expert at different times and the resulting codes were compared. The coded texts were checked by the field expert, and a code list was created. Categories were created based on the codes and each code was placed in the appropriate category.

According to the descriptive analysis approach, the data were summarised and interpreted according to the predetermined themes. The data were clearly described and were analysed using content analysis to create the themes. For this purpose, the data collected were first conceptualised and then arranged logically according to the concepts. Thus, themes explaining the data were obtained. To ensure the validity of the research, the opinions of the participants are provided as direct quotations.

**Findings**

This section elaborates on the analysis of the data obtained using the "Social Studies Attitude Scale for Students", "Social Studies Attitude Scale for Teachers" and "Self-Efficacy Scale for Teachers" in the quantitative phase of the research and the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews conducted using a semi-structured interviews in the qualitative phase.

**Findings from the Quantitative Phase**

This section presents the findings obtained by analysing the data collected in the quantitative phase of the research in tables.

**Findings Related to the First Research Question**

What is the level of efficacy of primary school classroom teachers in teaching social studies course?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efficacy</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std.Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>63,5</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The opinions of the participating primary school teachers who taught the 4th graders in the first level of primary education about their self-efficacy in teaching the social studies course were sought, and the self-efficacy scale was administered to explore this. The responses of the participant teachers were analysed, presented in tables, and interpreted.

Classroom teachers' efficacy levels in the social studies course are presented in Table 1. An analysis of the data in Table 1 reveal that the lowest score that can be obtained in the self-efficacy scale was 18, while the highest score was 90. The teachers' perceived efficacy score was 63,5. The findings show that classroom teachers' efficacy in the social studies course is below the average.

**Findings Related to the Second Research Question**

Do the attitudes of primary school classroom teachers towards social studies course play a role on the students' attitudes towards social studies course?

The "Social Studies Attitude Scale for Teachers" administered to primary school classroom teachers and the "Student Social Studies Attitude Scale" administered to fifth grade students were used to answer this question, and the answers given by the participating teachers and students were analysed. They are shown and interpreted in the tables below.
Table 2. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Results for the Effects of Primary School Classroom Teachers’ Attitudes towards Social Studies Course on Students’ Attitudes towards This Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Attitudes</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<0.05

The effects of classroom teachers' attitudes towards social studies course on students' attitudes towards this course are presented in Table 2.

As seen in Table 2, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis conducted to determine the relationship between classroom teachers' attitudes towards the social studies course and students' attitudes towards the social studies course revealed a statistically significant positive correlation, p<.05 level (r = 0.149; p < 0.05).

Findings Related to the Third Research Question

How do primary school classroom teachers' attitudes towards social studies course affect students' academic achievement in the social studies course?

The data used for answering this question were collected using "Social Studies Attitude Scale for Teachers", which was administered to reveal the attitudes of the classroom teachers working in primary schools towards the social studies course. The students’ 1st semester scores for the social studies course obtained using the "Student Personal Information Form" were also used to this end. The responses of the participating teachers and students were analysed, tabulated and interpreted.

The impact of the classroom teachers' attitudes towards the social studies course on students' academic achievement in the social studies course is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Results for the Effects of Primary School Classroom Teachers' Attitudes towards Social Studies Course on Students' Academic Achievement in Social Studies Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Attitudes</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>0.222</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s Academic Achievement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<0.01

The data in Table 3 suggest that there is a statistically positive and significant relationship (r = 0.22; p < 0.01) between classroom teachers' attitudes towards the social studies course and students' academic achievement in the course. The level of significance was at 0.01 level.

Findings Related to the Fourth Research Question

How do primary school classroom teachers' attitudes towards social studies course affect their competences in the course?

To find out how the attitudes of classroom teachers working in primary schools towards the social studies course affect their self-efficacy in
the same course, the "Teacher social studies Attitude Scale" and "Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale" were administered to the classroom teachers. The responses of the participant classroom teachers were analysed and interpreted.

Table 4 shows how the classroom teachers' attitudes towards the social studies course affect their self-efficacy in the same course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Attitudes</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>0.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Self-Efficacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p<0.05

As can be seen from Table 4, as a result of the Spearman Rank Difference Correlation analysis conducted to determine the relationship between the scores obtained from the attitude scale and the self-efficacy scores obtained using the teacher self-efficacy scale, a statistically significant positive relationship was found at the level of p < 0.05.

Findings Related to the Fifth Research Question

What are the attitudes of primary school classroom teachers towards the social studies course? To reveal the attitudes of primary school classroom teachers towards the social studies course, the "Teacher Social Studies Attitude Scale" was administered to the participating teachers and their responses were used to answer this question.

The attitudes of classroom teachers towards the social studies course are shown in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std.Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Attitude</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>.59773</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the data in Table 5 are analysed, it is seen that the lowest score that can be obtained from the "Teacher Social Studies Course Attitude Scale" was 20 and the highest score was 100. The mean score was 80. The findings reveal that the teachers had an attitude above the average.

Findings Related to the Sixth Research Question

Do the attitudes of primary school fifth grade students towards social studies course differ based on their level of success in the course?

The answers obtained from the "Social Studies Attitude Scale for Students" and "Student Personal Information Form" administered to the students to determine whether the attitudes of the fifth-grade primary school students towards the social studies course differ based on the achievement scores of the same students in the social studies course. The answers given by the students were analysed, shown in tables and interpreted. Table 6 shows the difference in the attitudes of fifth grade primary school students towards the social studies course based on their success in the course.

As clearly seen in Table 6, the result of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were statistically significant (F=12,034; 001). After this process, complementary post-hoc analysis techniques were used to determine which groups
were responsible for the significant difference determined using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

To decide which post-hoc multiple comparison technique to use after ANOVA, firstly, the hypothesis of whether the variances of the group distributions were homogeneous was tested using Levene's test. The results of Levene's test indicated that the variances were homogeneous (LF=0.399).

Therefore, Scheffe test, which is widely used in case of homogeneity of variances, was preferred as it is highly sensitive to alpha type error. The results of the Scheffe test are presented in Table 7.

**Table 6. The Results of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Conducted to Determine Whether the Attitudes of Primary School Fifth Grade Students towards Social Studies Course Differ Based on Their Achievement in the Course**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th></th>
<th>sd</th>
<th>Var</th>
<th>KT</th>
<th>Sd</th>
<th>KO</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>26-50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>G.Bet</td>
<td>9.19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51-75</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>in-group</td>
<td>98.21</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>76-100</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>107.4</td>
<td>259</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.03</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7. The Post-Hoc Scheffe Test Results Conducted to Determine Which Subgroups’ Attitudes Towards Social Studies Course Differ Based on the Achievement scores (Final Grade)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>End-of-Term Grade (i)</th>
<th>End-of-Term Grade (j)</th>
<th>( \bar{x}_i - \bar{x}_j )</th>
<th>( Sh_\bar{x} )</th>
<th>( P )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26-50</td>
<td>51-75</td>
<td>-1.2336</td>
<td>1.7525</td>
<td>.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>76-100</td>
<td>-1.9571</td>
<td>1.6643</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-75</td>
<td>26-50</td>
<td>-1.2336</td>
<td>1.7525</td>
<td>.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>76-100</td>
<td>-3.7324</td>
<td>.08635</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.08635</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51-75</td>
<td>-3.7324</td>
<td>.08635</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *\( p<0.05 \)

As a result of the post-hoc Scheffe test conducted after one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine between which subgroups’ the attitude scores towards social studies course differed based on the variable of achievement scores (final grade), a statistically significant difference was found between the groups with final grades 26-50 and 76-100 and 51-75 and 76-100 at the level of \( p<0.05 \). However, the difference between the groups with final grades 26-50 and 51-75 was not statistically significant \( (p>0.05) \).

**Findings from Qualitative Phase**

This section presents primary school classroom teachers’ attitudes and perceptions towards the social studies course and its impact on their self-efficacy. The findings are supported by quotes from the responses of the teachers to the interview questions. Since participant confidentiality promised in the informed consent form in the research, the names of the participant teachers are not revealed; the teachers are shown using coded names (i.e., P1, P2).

**Findings Related to the First Research Question**

What is the level of self-efficacy of primary school classroom teachers in teaching the social studies course?
The first research question sought to investigate the self-efficacy levels of classroom teachers working in primary schools in the social studies course.

In response to the question "Do you think that you teach the social studies course efficiently?", the classroom teachers stated that they considered themselves efficient in teaching this course. All the participants, except P11 and P19, stated that they taught the lessons efficiently and attributed this to the feedback they received from the students. Some the participant teachers expressed the following opinions:

"...Definitely yes, I think the instruction works efficiently.
- How did you come to this conclusion and to what extent you find yourself efficient and sufficient?
This is clear in the feedback from the students. The feedback that the children give me... These can be written or in the exam or verbally. It can also because I get answers to the questions I ask. I can see, or at least feel, that I have taught the social studies course and its subjects efficiently. In this respect, the fact that I was able to contribute to them shows that I have sufficient knowledge in this course. (P2)"

"...Yes, I think I teach efficiently.
- Why did you come to such a conclusion?
I think I taught efficient because I taught the subject with both visual and auditory activities. Our exam grades are good, the children get good grades. Also, I recognise that children’s feelings of unity and solidarity increase, and I think that I teach the lesson in a good way because the feedback from the students is very good and positive. This shows that I can offer them many things. (P3)"

"...Yes.
Why do you think so?
I mean, when I ask questions to the children, I can get very good answers, or my 4th grade students are able to answer the questions that 7th and 8th grade children cannot, and they can easily give very good answers. This means that I have given the students what I should give (P4)."

"...I definitely think so because, as I said, I enjoy the social studies course.
How do you understand that you are an efficient teacher?
Here is how I know it: there are definitely 10-12 of my students in all activities. This shows that my children are not afraid of anything. My children are sociable and active. I consider myself efficient and competent because I believe and observe that I am raising children in accordance with the objectives of this course. (P10)"

Most of the participant teachers stated that they taught the social studies lessons efficiently and that they understood this from the feedback they received from the students. However, P19 and P11 differed from the others and stated that they taught inefficiently and that they were not sufficient for the students by citing the feedback given by the students as a reason:

"...I don’t think I do.
- Why do think so? How did you arrive at this conclusion?
Open the social studies book; you are finishing a semester; you are going to give an exam to the children at the end of the semester, but you cannot find the right questions to ask. You will make an evaluation; you will do it, but when you look at the book, you can’t even find a proper question to ask.

Findings Related to the Second and Third Research Questions

Do the attitudes of primary school classroom teachers towards the social studies course have an impact on students' attitudes towards this course? The participants were asked the question "How would you evaluate your attitudes towards social studies course?" in the interview form. In response to the questions "Do you observe the effects of your attitudes? How would you describe them?" (follow-up question, except for P6, P9 and P14, all participants stated that their attitudes towards the social studies course were positive. P6 stated that he sometimes had a positive attitude towards the social studies course, and he/she had a negative attitude at times. He stated that the reason for his negative attitude was that he could not memorise history topics because he was a student who previously
studied mathematical topics. He stated the following on this issue:

"...I am actually student who graduated from maths and science. Since history is especially in social studies, I had a lot of problems with memorisation; now I urge the children to understand rather than memorise. Of course, there may be times when I look at it positively or negatively.

-Can you explain the times when you feel negative?

Let me put it this way, teaching the class by following the textbook on a verbatim basis is a very boring task. I prefer to teach not with the textbook but with activities other than the textbook. Sometimes there is not enough time, so we have to go through the activities quickly. I think finding visual materials is a problematic issue. Finding materials that children can use is a bit troublesome (K6)."

P9 said "I don't have a very positive attitude" and stated that there were one or two subjects that grabbed his interest depending on the subjects in the course and that he hardly enjoyed the rest at all.

Similarly, P14 stated that he did not like the social studies course, but he had to teach it, and that it might be due to the fact that the course content was too much and many non-essential subjects were included in the book:

"...It is necessary for the students. Whether I like it or not, I have to be useful to my students. I have to teach the curriculum. Even if I don't like it or I don't enjoy it, it is necessary for the students; there is nothing to say about that. But there is too much content, and all of this excess content is useless. It is unnecessary. I think this should be revised. I wonder who prepared this book. If I had prepared it, I would do a better job. I am not saying this to boast about myself, but nothing could be worse than this. (P14)"

The probe question "Could you explain why you have a positive attitude?" was asked to the participants who stated that their attitudes towards this course were positive because the social studies course teaches students the skills to be used in daily life and the knowledge that will enable them to lead a better life society.

Some of the participant teachers expressed the following opinions when asked the follow-up question "Can you explain why you have a positive attitude?"

"...Because mutual dialogue with children happens much more frequently in the social studies course. This, in my opinion, is something positive because children can work more actively and have more to say. They can make more comments, which is very important for me. It makes me very happy when they ask questions with pleasure and with shining eyes. Their excitement passes to me and mine to them. (P2)"

"...Because we are raised with national values, I like to teach this lesson. I see it positively because my students are very eager and look forward to the next lesson. (P3)"

"...In my opinion, the social studies course is too valuable to be replaced with another course. Just like Science, Mathematics, Turkish courses, the social studies course is indispensable. It is a course that students should definitely take to learn about everything from personal hygiene to moral behaviour. Respect and love in life are learned in this course. (P5)"

P5 stated that his positive attitude towards social studies course stemmed from his years as a student at school and his professional life. He said the following:

"...During my school years, it was a course that I liked very much; maybe the teacher made me like it. It is also due to my professional life. I took this course in my school life, and it brought many achievements into our lives. Now we are trying to pass these achievements to children so that they can do something good in life. And I see that they take me as an example, just like I did at school as a student (P5).

These responses globally suggest that the students of the teachers who had positive attitudes towards the course can also exhibit positive attitudes.

Findings Related to the Fourth Research Question

How do the attitudes of primary school teachers towards the social studies course affect their self-efficacy in the course?
The interview protocol included some questions to collect data to answer this research question. The interview questions included, but were not limited to, the questions "How would you evaluate your attitudes towards the social studies course?" and "Do you think you teach the social studies course efficiently?" The answers given by the participant teachers were analysed and some of the responses are provided below.

Participants P9 and P14 stated that their attitudes towards the social studies course were not positive. They noted that they could not teach their lessons efficiently, and therefore they considered themselves inadequate:

"...We cannot go beyond the curriculum. Frankly, I do not know if I am contributing to the students. I do additional work when I consider it necessary, but I can hardly do more than that. It is not very productive. I look at the students' responses; if more than 20 out of 35 students (more than half of them) cannot answer the questions, it makes me think that I am inadequate. I cannot say that this is only due to me, students, parents etc. are all responsible for this (P9)."

P6 described his attitude towards the social studies course as follows: "It can be positive or negative from time to time". He also added that the social studies course was taught efficiently and that he found himself sufficient. Although P11 and P19 reported positive attitudes towards the social studies course, they found themselves inadequate. They attributed this to their inefficient teaching of the course.

P11 explained that the students and himself were very bored in the lesson because the subjects of the social studies course were abstract and that the students and himself were constantly repeating abstract subjects. P11 reported hearing the students say, "if only the bell would ring".

P19 attributed the inability of the social studies course to provide students with skills that can be used in daily life to the fact that he was working in the countryside and explained his inadequacy as follows: "We cannot reduce the social studies course to practice alone, and I work in a village; children are a little more distant from social life. They are highly reserved. Therefore, I do not think that we can fully attain the objectives; I think we cannot attain them."

Findings Related to the Fifth Research Question

What are the attitudes of primary school teachers towards the social studies course?

This sub-section provides the answers given to question "How would you evaluate your attitudes towards the social studies course?" in the interview form. The answers received in the form of positive and negative were further explored in depth through follow-up questions such as "If positive, what was effective in your instruction?", "If negative, what are the factors?".

The answers given by the participant teachers were analysed and shown in the table below.

When Table 8 is analysed: two participant teachers out of 21 had negative attitudes towards social studies course, and one participant had both positive and negative attitudes.

When the participant teachers with positive attitudes were asked what the reasons for these attitudes might be, the following answers were provided:

"...This is because we are raised with national values; I like to teach this course. Children are also very eager, so I see the whole thing positively. (P3)"

"...As I said before, children cannot go everywhere and see everything, they cannot travel, they do not know what's around. For example, we have children who have not seen the sea; hardly know what it is like. They cannot imagine it, but when I explain it with drawings and visuals, it is useful. This helps them learn. (P4)"

"...The social studies course is a course that students should definitely take to learn about everything from personal hygiene and moral behaviour to respect and love in life (P5)" P7, P8 and P12 expressed similar views. For instance, P7 said "...When we look at the problems experienced, they are the same as those experienced in the past; our elders also experienced them in the past. Being aware of our past will raise our and our children’s awareness of dangers, and we will act more carefully." He
drew attention to the connection between the past and the future. Using a similar expression, P8 said, "...I have a positive attitude towards social studies because people learn both their past and their future; they learn about life." P12 stated that "...a child who learns about his/her past looks at the future more smartly."

Table 8. The Attitudes of Primary School Classroom Teachers towards Social Studies Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Partially Positive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>P3</td>
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<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>P8</td>
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<td>P9</td>
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<td>P10</td>
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<td>P11</td>
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<td>P12</td>
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<td>P13</td>
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<tr>
<td>P21</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</table>

"...I have a positive attitude. The social studies course is indispensable. It is important in the social upbringing of every person. It is not like a numeracy course. The child may know the numeric courses very well, but he/she should also know, say, how to establish ties with his/her family. This can only be achieved through a social studies course. A child may be able to solve a problem in maths alone, but he/she has to get support from his/her environment to deal with a subject in social studies. Therefore, the social studies course is a must for us (P10)." Using similar words, P16 and P18 stated that their attitudes towards the social studies course were positive. P16 said, "Since there are real-life subjects, it is positive because we introduce the environment around the child by using facts. I think so because we explain something that really exists." Likewise, P18 said: "I attach importance to social studies to prepare children for life, to help them learn our past, and be social students. I can say that it is a little bit more important than other courses".

18 of the 21 participant teachers stated that their attitudes towards the social studies course were positive.

Conclusion

The main research question in the study was formulated as follows: "Do the perceptions and attitudes of classroom teachers towards social studies course affect students' attitudes towards the course?" The study adopted a mixed-method research design in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The data obtained by using a multi-stage mixed method design were analysed and interpreted.
Results Regarding the Self-Efficacy of Primary School Classroom Teachers

In this section, the responses to the first research question are discussed. The mean score of the teachers' self-efficacy perception level was 63.5. In this context, the perception level score of the teachers shows that they have a competence below the average.

However, in line with the data obtained from the interviews with teachers in the qualitative phase of the study, all the participants, except for K11 and K19, stated that they considered themselves competent in terms of teaching the social studies course. In this context, 19 out of 21 participants (90.5%) found themselves sufficient, while 2 participants (9.5%) did not find themselves competent enough.

Although the classroom teachers received a score below the average in the self-efficacy scale, they expressed in the interviews that they found themselves competent; this result was reached because they attributed this to the fact that the social studies course was taught efficiently, and the feedback received from the students about the course was positive. This result is in line with Öztürk and Ünal's (1998) study, which found that classroom teachers find themselves competent to teach social studies course, but this competence varies relatively.

Results Regarding Whether the Attitudes of Primary School Classroom Teachers towards Social Studies Course are Effective on Students' Attitudes towards This Course

When we look at the results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation test that was conducted to determine whether the attitudes of primary school classroom teachers towards social studies course correlate with those of the students, it was concluded that there is a statistically significant positive relationship at p<.05 level. In the qualitative phase of the research, among the 21 participant teachers, 4.5% of the participants expressed their attitudes towards the social studies course negatively, while 85% of the 18 participant teachers expressed their attitudes towards the social studies course positively. The participant teachers who expressed their attitudes towards social studies course positively and negatively were asked "Can you observe the effects of your attitudes? How would you express it?" (follow-up question). As a response to these questions, some of the participant teachers stated that the way they viewed their lessons had an effect on students' attitudes towards the course. They made the following comments:

"Their excitement is passed on to me and mine to them. (P2)", "Since the children are very enthusiastic in the lesson, they look forward to the next lesson, which increases their excitement for the lesson. (P3)", "And I see that they take me as an example, just like when I did while I was a student, and this is of course reflected both in the lesson and in life. (P5)", "My colleagues also say that my children are very interested in the social studies course; they always ask me questions, we always talk about historical stories with other teachers (P7)". "My students are known for their courtesy and good manners. I teach them and they are quite pleased it and even compete among themselves to exhibit examples of good behaviour. (P15)", "Sometimes they tell the historical stories I tell in the classroom to their parents at home. I am both surprised and happy when parents tell me this (P21)". It was concluded that the attitudes of classroom teachers towards the social studies course directly and indirectly affect the students' attitudes towards the course.

This result is in line with those of the study conducted by Chido and Byford (2004), who found that teacher attitudes and behaviours are effective on student attitudes. The studies conducted by Öztürk and Baysal (1999) and Sidekli (2010) also lend support to this finding as they found that teacher attitudes have a direct effect on student attitudes. Similarly, Okon and Archibong (2014) found that teachers with positive and negative attitudes towards the course affect their students in the same way. McGoman, Sutton, and Smith (1990) found that teachers' attitudes in the classroom directly affect those of the students. In another study conducted by Omolara and Adebukola (2015), similar findings were obtained. They concluded...
that all the characteristics of the teacher and their attitudes towards the lesson affect the students.

**Results Regarding How the Attitudes of Primary School Classroom Teachers towards Social Studies Course Affect Students' Academic Achievement in the Course**

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation test indicated a significant relationship between the attitude of the classroom teachers and the academic achievement of the students, and it was determined that the attitude and achievement showed the same level of increase and decrease.

In their study, Tay and Tay (2006) discovered similar characteristics with the result that there is a significant relationship between attitude and achievement. Likewise, Yılmazer and Demir (2014) found that there was a significant relationship between students' attitudes towards their teachers and their academic achievement in their study. Okon and Archibong (2014) found that students of teachers who had positive attitudes towards social studies course also had high performance scores.

**Results on How Primary School Classroom Teachers' Attitudes towards Social Studies Course Affect Their Self-Efficacy in the Course**

As a result of the Spearman correlation analysis conducted to determine the relationship between the scores obtained from the attitude scale and the self-efficacy scores obtained from the teacher self-efficacy scale, it was concluded that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between the scores at \( p < 0.05 \) level.

From the responses received in the interviews with the participant teachers, it was concluded that the attitudes of 9.5% of the participants did not affect the competence of 9.5% of the participants. They considered themselves inadequate for the course. K11 and K19 stated that their attitudes towards the social studies course were positive. On the other hand, teachers coded K6, K9 and K21 stated that their attitudes were negative, but they considered themselves competent in teaching the course, and it was concluded that 14% of the participants' attitudes did not affect competence.

Despite this, it was concluded that 76% of the participants (16 teachers) had positive attitudes towards the social studies course and found themselves competent in teaching the course. Similarly, Özkal (2001) drew the conclusion that increasing the level of self-efficacy would increase positive attitudes towards the course. In another study, Özkal (2013) concluded that increasing the level of self-efficacy towards social studies course could also increase positive attitudes towards the course.

**Results Related to the Attitudes of Primary School Classroom Teachers towards Social Studies Course**

An examination of the descriptive data about the attitudes of classroom teachers towards the social studies course reveals that the participant teachers who scored 81.2 points in the "Teacher Social Studies Attitude Scale" had an attitude above the average.

In the qualitative phase of the research, K6, had a partially positive attitude, while K9 and K14 had negative attitudes, and 85.7% of the other participants had positive attitudes towards the social studies course. Öztürk and Ünal (1998) noted that the teachers' attitudes towards the social studies course were "sometimes" positive, which differs from the result of the present study. Similarly, Zhao and Hoge (2005) concluded that teachers had negative attitudes towards the social studies course, which is not similar to the result of the study. On the other hand, Özkal, Güngör and Çetingöz (2004) concluded that teachers' opinions towards the social studies course were generally positive, which supports the result of the present study.

**Findings about the Attitudes of Primary School Fifth Grade Students Towards Social Studies Course Differ Based on Their Success in the Course**

As a result of the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted to determine whether the attitudes of fifth grade students towards the social studies course differed based on their achievement in the course, it was concluded that
the difference between the mean scores at the end of the term was statistically significant. The post-hoc analysis was carried out using Scheffe test to determine which groups caused the significant difference. The test suggested that there was a significant difference between the groups with final grades 26-50 and 76-100 and 51-75 and 76-100, while the difference between 26-50 and 51-75 was not statistically significant. Globally considered, it was concluded that students' attitudes towards the course differed according to their success in the course.

**Recommendations**

In the light of the findings obtained in the present study, the social studies course, which aims to raise active citizens equipped with qualities of rights, freedoms and democracy, is taught by classroom teachers in primary schools. In such a course, the classroom teacher's perceptions about and attitudes towards the course are very important for the students. Based on these considerations, some suggestions are offered.

1. In studies examining teacher self-efficacy, not only the teacher's own perceptions but also expert opinions about the teacher's competencies can be taken into consideration.

2. The present study can be replicated in larger groups and longer-term studies.

3. This study investigated the effects of perceptions, attitudes and behaviour of primary school teachers teaching the fifth grades. It can be expanded to include the sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

4. In the present study, the opinions of both primary school teachers and fifth grade students about social studies and their attitudes were investigated. An analysis of the literature revealed that there were few studies focusing on teachers' attitudes towards the social studies course. Studies can be conducted to address this apparent gap.

5. In-service activities can be organised for classroom teachers about social studies instruction and its importance.

6. Future researchers could investigate the interaction between teacher and student attitudes in different courses.

7. In teacher training programmes, more activities that could help prospective classroom teachers the social studies more effectively can be included in the programme.

8. Affective objectives are very important the social studies course. To attain these objectives, it is essential that teachers and students develop positive attitudes towards the course. Curriculum designers and educational administrators at all levels should take measures to ensure this.

9. Classroom teachers should receive in-service training on cognitive and affective domains to be able to offer more qualified and efficient education. In this way, they could be more beneficial to their students, and they can have more positive attitudes towards the social studies course.

10. To change students' negative attitudes towards social studies course, they should be given the opportunity to be successful. This can be done by ensuring their active participation in the education and training process.

11. Teachers should provide their students an effective communicative environment, reassure them and support them with current examples highlighting the importance of the course, so that they can be effective in improving the students' attitudes towards the course.

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