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Skill Teaching in the Social Studies Course in the Light of Graduate Theses

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Abstract

This study investigates the trends of postgraduate theses on skills teaching in Social Studies education between 2010-2020, identifies the problems encountered by researchers in the process of skills teaching, and presents the solutions provided to these problems. With this purpose, 74 master and doctoral theses on skills teaching in the Social Studies course were included in the research. Descriptive content analysis was used in data analysis. The results demonstrated that there are mainly attempts towards practical implementations in skills teaching, and the teaching processes are important in the Social Studies course. The investigation revealed that many studies were conducted on skills development, but the number of theses on social skills was limited. It was determined that some of these theses had insufficient explanation regarding the teaching-learning processes. However, the experiences of the researchers concerning the processes were not included in many of the theses. It was also observed that in some of the theses, there was no information about the assessment tools utilized, and some researchers were not critical of the results of the analyses. In addition, there was no scientific justification for the time allocated to the implementations in most of these theses. Researchers stated that they encountered problems due to insufficient implementation time in the skills development process. The suggestions made by the researchers at the end of the process include updating the curricula and course books, eliminating the school infrastructure deficiencies, and providing in-service training to teachers.

Keywords: Social studies course, Skill training, Descriptive content analysis, Master theses, Doctoral theses

Introduction

There have been significant changes from the past to the present in answering the question of what kind of individuals to raise. The eternal cycle of social transformations that occur in line with the changing environmental circumstances and the environmental consequences that these social transformations bring carry us to the future. Education systems play an essential role in adapting to these changes. In this respect, frameworks of competencies are established for the requirements of the current century, standards are determined, and evaluations are carried out through these standards. Today's curricula have a pioneering role in the engagement of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed in training individuals who are compatible with the transformations. Skills are an integral component of the frameworks of competencies. They are also equally important in the curricula of Social Studies. In the curriculum, there are 27 basic skills planned to be taught to students in the Social Studies course. These skills consist of researching, environmental literacy, perceiving change and continuity, digital literacy, critical thinking, empathy, economic literacy, entrepreneurship, observation, map literacy, legal literacy, communication, collaboration, recognizing stereotypes and prejudice, using evidence, making decisions, location analysis, media literacy, space perception, self-control, political literacy, problem-solving, social participation, drawing and interpreting tables, graphs and diagrams, using Turkish accurately and effectively, innovative thinking, and perception of time and chronology (Ministry of Education [MEB], 2018). Social Studies course has a substantial role in preparing the individual for society and realizing the social transformation that the century demands. It can be said that skills are an integral component of the process in the realization of this course and the stated objectives of our education system.

Skills

The concept of skills in the Social Studies curricula is defined as the individual becoming able to do a task by engaging in cognitive and behavioural efforts according to the level of readiness in appropriate learning environments (Yazıcı and Koca, 2015). Skill, in general, is the capacity to do something well and perform certain

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tasks competently, and it is gained through training and experience. Typically, skills consist of strategies and methods that are partially internalized and included in the performance routine. Skills may vary depending on the tasks they handle. Therefore, a broad skill may contain more activities than a narrow one (Smith, 2002).
In the past, the term skill was used to represent observable behaviors that required professionalism, and their focal point was improving behaviour. Today, skills have been stripped of behavioural definitions and treated as construction operations and processes in mind. In line with this trend, the focus has been changed to developing linguistic, cognitive, and social competencies through education processes (Boutin, 2004 cited. in Güneş, 2018b; Güneş, 2012). The influential factor in this change is production. While the skills required in agricultural and industrial societies are predominantly behavioural and physical, these skills have been replaced mainly by linguistic, cognitive, and social skills in the information society.
Skills are structures with self-forming sub-behaviours with no sharp distinctions among them, where the dimensions of knowledge and application are synthesized and require competence (Baysal, 2015). Even though skills differ in their scope and content, they share some common characteristics. Johnson (1997) lists these characteristics as follows (cited. in Karabağ and İnal, 2016):

- They are hierarchically organized.
- They are purposeful behaviour.
- They have components and contain sub-behaviours.
- They are integrated. They require multiple skills to be employed mutually.

Several classifications of skills have been made in the literature. One of these classifications is the division between general skills and field skills. General skills include thinking, research, problem-solving, and communication that can be transferred to different areas to perform various tasks and works. On the other hand, field skills are field-dependent skills that need to be learned in a certain discipline domain (Güneş, 2016). Other classifications of skills in the literature include the following (Parker, 2012):

- Democratic participation skills: Expressing opinions and listening; engaging in discussions about social problems; maintaining discussion; collaboration; accessing and using social resources.
- Work and interrogation skills: Using and making time schedules, maps, and graphs; distinguishing primary resources from secondary ones; formulating hypotheses; reading, analysing, reporting, and presenting information from different resources.
- Cognitive skills (problem-solving, critical thinking): Comparing; reaching a decision based on evidence; recognizing and characterizing problems; differentiating facts from views; interpreting cause and effect.

Since the study by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2005) to determine the key skills for 21st-century individuals creates an inclusive roof for skills and literacies, this structure may also be considered in classifying skills. OECD (2005) divides key skills into three categories. These are:

1. Using tools interactively:
   Rationale: Keeping up with technologies, adapting tools to own purposes, and meeting the need to conduct an active dialogue with the world
   a. Using language, symbols, and texts interactively (entails skills such as language skills, computation, and mathematical skills, map reading)
   b. Using knowledge and information interactively (involves critical thinking about the nature of information)
   c. Using technology interactively
2. Interacting in heterogeneous groups:
   Rationale: The necessity to deal with diversity in pluralistic societies, the importance of society, the importance of social capital
   a. Ability to relate well to others (includes empathy, management of emotions, interpreting dynamics underlying behaviours)
   b. Ability to cooperate (which means being able to share ideas, listen, debate, and make decisions that take into account different points of view.)
   c. Ability to manage and resolve conflicts
3. Acting Autonomously
   Rationale: The need to set goals and realise one's identity in the complex world, the need to exercise rights and take responsibility, the need to understand one's environment and its functioning
   a. Ability to look at events from a broad perspective and act within this big perspective (includes understanding relationships, understanding-analysing the structure and function of a system, and predicting direct and indirect consequences of events)
   b. Ability to form and conduct life plans and personal projects

c. Ability to defend personal and societal rights, interests, and needs

Apart from this classification, Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2015) guides in terms of the skills that 21st-century learners need to acquire. The study provides another type of categorization of the skills that students need to master. This categorization is as follows:

- Learning and Innovation Skills
  - Creativity and innovation
  - Critical thinking and problem-solving
  - Communication
  - Collaboration
- Information, Media, and Technology Skills
  - Information literacy
  - Media literacy
  - Information, communication, and technology skills
- Life and Career Skills
  - Flexibility and adaptability
  - Initiative and self-direction
  - Social and cross-cultural skills
  - Productivity and accountability
  - Leadership and responsibility

In another classification, the skills are divided into general and field (specific) skills. General skills are the ones that are transferable to different areas to perform certain tasks, such as researching, questioning, making decisions, thinking, communicating, and collaborating. In contrast, field skills need to be mastered within a specific discipline (Güneş, 2016; Schunk, 2009).

How the skills should be taught and evaluated is closely related to how these skills are classified. Hence, it is possible to say that before discussing how to teach or evaluate them, it is necessary to adopt a particular type of classification. At this point, it is concluded that it would be appropriate to address the skills as thinking, social, and instrumental skills in this study.

Thinking Skills

Cüceloğlu (1998) states that thinking is a series of active, purpose-oriented, organized mental processes to make sense of the situation one is in. Fisher (1995), on the other hand, defines thinking as critical and creative reflections in which developing ideas and reasoning are used together. He maintains that thinking includes all cognitive processes that help problem-solving, decision-making, analysis, and reasoning. In this framework, thinking skills can be defined as the ability to operate the aforementioned mental processes and use the relevant information for this purpose. Presseisen (1985) divides thinking skills into basic processes and complex processes. She expresses that the basic processes include actions such as building cause-effect relationships and evaluating, associating the known with the unknown, recognizing relationships, and classifying and noticing attributes. By contrast, complex processes include problem-solving, decision making, critical thinking, and creative thinking.

Berman (1991) suggests that when students' opinions are valued when their thinking affects their lives and those of others, and when it makes a difference, students will feel more confident in their thoughts and will be more skilled at thinking. In parallel to the principle above, he suggested some strategies to teach thinking skills. These strategies are:

- Creating a safe environment
- Monitoring and understanding children's thoughts
- Encouraging collaborative thinking
- Caring about questions rather than answers
- Focusing on connections and relationships
- Helping gain multiple perspectives
- Making the role of emotions in thinking recognised
- Helping students set standards and gain a positive outlook for the future
- Giving students opportunities to turn their thoughts to reality

These strategies will aid in creating environments that support the development of students' thinking skills. Beyer (2001) proposed direct teaching in teaching complex and challenging thinking skills and combining the teaching

of thinking skills with the teaching of subject matter knowledge. Furthermore, he mentioned the importance of featuring activities to support meaningful thinking in the classroom environment. These activities include scientific method steps such as research, problem-solving, evidence-based inquiry, and project creation.

Social Skills

It is peer acceptance in its simplest definition. Social skills are situation-specific behaviours that enable to receive or maintain the support of the environment, minimize the likelihood of punishment by society, and enable to exist in society (Gresham, 1988). Social skills are behaviours that enable individuals to build positive relationships with other individuals that constitute society. They ensure that the individual participates in society due to their compliance with social rules. They are situational and may vary depending on the setting. Besides observable behaviour, they have cognitive and affective dimensions (Stanley, 2010). They also include citizenship skills such as democratic participation, decision-making, and discussion (Parker, 2012). Goldstein et al. (1980) made a classification of social skills. In this taxonomy, social skills are classified into six groups (in Bacanlı, 2008):

- Beginning social skills: e.g., speaking, listening, introducing oneself
- Advanced social skills: e.g., participation, asking for help, giving instructions
- Skills for dealing with feelings: e.g., expressing and being aware of own feelings, empathy
- Skills alternative to aggression: e.g., negotiation, sharing, avoiding the fight
- Skills for dealing with stress: e.g., coping with shyness, responding to complaints, defending friends
- Planning skills: e.g., setting goals, decision making

By approaching social skills from a more general perspective, Gresham (1998) states that social skills are academic achievement (ability to gain a place in the classroom), collaborative behaviours, social initiation behaviours, enterprise, peer reinforcement, communication skills, problem-solving skills, and social self-sufficiency. Social skills can often be gained through performance-based, individual, or group training, conducted with behavioural approaches (Stanley, 2010). Gresham (1998) proposes a model in teaching social skills. This proposal consists of the dimensions of encouraging skills acquisition, improving skill performance, eliminating obstructive behaviours, and facilitating generalization. The dimension of encouraging skills acquisition employs being a model and instructions-explanations about coaching and skills. The model suggests that the most effective way of skills teaching is being a model. It is stated that behavioural rehearsal, behavioural consolidation, peer initiation, and collaborative learning strategies can improve skill performance. It is also pointed out that steps should be taken to dampen unwanted behaviours that have a negative effect on the acquisition and development of skills in the dimension of eliminating obstructive behaviours. In terms of facilitating generalization, it is stated that natural communities can be used to transfer acquired skills to different situations, exercises can be diversified, and functional intermediaries such as role-playing, animation, and routers can be used.

Instrumental Skills

To effectively interact with the environment, individuals must be able to use a variety of tools, such as information technologies, which are instruments of physical structure, and language use, which is an instrument of socio-cultural structure. The social and professional demands of the information society require mastery of physical tools such as computers and socio-cultural tools such as language, knowledge, and fund of knowledge. Instrumental skills are related to effective speaking and listening skills and computation and mathematics skills in multiple situations. Communication skills and literacies are also associated with this group (OECD, 2005). Based on these, we can define instrumental skills as those that mediate the realization of a roof competence (e.g., digital literacy for the effective use of digital tools in various fields), such as media literacy, digital literacy, map literacy, legal literacy, effective use of language, drawing and interpreting tables/graphs/diagrams.

Teaching of Skills

According to Piaget and Vygotsky, skill is the constructionon of knowledge acquired from physical and social interaction in mind based on prior knowledge (Quiesse, 2007 qtd in Güneş, 2012). Skills are developed by constructing in mind as a result of various activities. Skill cannot be simply transferred through education. The skill is developed through the active efforts of the individual. Skill requires the activation of various mental, emotional, and physical resources (Quiesse, 2007 cited. in Güneş, 2018a). Güneş (2012) suggests three stages to be followed in skill teaching. These stages are:

Skill preparation: This is the stage where information about the skill and the purpose of the skill is explained. It should be emphasized that these explanations are necessary for the execution of the work or application.

Applying knowledge and techniques: This is the stage where the knowledge and techniques related to the skill are shown to the student with examples. The students are given activities that will provide them with opportunity to apply this knowledge and techniques. During the process, the student is monitored and guided.

Adapting to different situations: At this stage, the student is working on adapting the skill to different situations. To achieve this, different activities are given in which the student can transfer the skill to other situations. The student is encouraged in the process. It should not be forgotten that individual differences will have an impact on learning speed.

The points to be considered in the skill-teaching process are as follows;

- Students' current knowledge and experience should be taken into consideration.
- Students should be encouraged in the process.
- There should be a wide range of activities so the student can use the skill differently. .
- Awareness about the skill should be created.

Issues such as the application stages of the skill, the difficulties experienced, and solution suggestions should be shared verbally during the process (Bissonette & Richard, 2001 cited. in Güneş, 2018b).

In teaching skills, students' developmental characteristics, readiness levels, psychological and sociological characteristics, interests, and needs should be taken into account. Students should be allowed to participate actively and experience the process first hand. Teaching experiences should be designed to start from the child's immediate environment and expand away. It should not be forgotten that for meaningful learning to take place, it is necessary to benefit from students' prior learning. New learning will be built on prior learning. Skills teaching activities should be designed in a sequence from easy to difficult. It should be considered that the violation of this principle may cause negative effects on behaviors such as self-confidence, motivation, and attitude (Sever, 2021).

Evaluation of Skills

Clearly identifying the structure intended to be assessed and meeting technical and psychometric standards constitute the first step in a qualified evaluation. It is important to determine what to assess and how to assess it. The structural characteristics of the skill to be measured will be effective in specifying the measurement tool. Therefore, whether the skill belongs to the cognitive, social, or psychomotor areas should be considered. Besides, attention should be paid to clearly identifying the indicators that represent the skill, and the evaluation instrument should be capable of measuring these indicators validly and reliably.

Another essential consideration in evaluating skills is whether to assess the practical knowledge or the performance regarding the skill. It should be first clarified whether the aim is to evaluate the individual's knowledge concerning the application of the skill, or whether it is to assess the performance related to displaying the skill. This distinction will directly impact the instrument that will be used in the assessment of the skill. If the skill to evaluate has a complex structure, and the assessment made will not cover all components of this structure, it should be decided which aspects of the structure are important to be captured (National Research Council [NRC], 2011). Selecting the components that best represent the skill and conducting the assessment on these components are critical for ensuring validity at this stage.

It is important to prepare test items of the type and nature that will reveal the skill to be measured in evaluating skills. If the aim is to assess the knowledge about the skill, it is necessary to utilize pen-and-paper tests with short questions and multiple-choice answer options. However, if the purpose is to measure more complex skills, such as solving complex, multipartite problems, a response mode that requires the test taker to create an answer will probably be more useful (NRC,2011). Furthermore, real or scenario-based, performance-oriented measuring tools that will disclose the skill may also be used in assessing skills with complex structures.

Some trend research studies in the literature examine research on Social Studies education. In their study examining graduate theses on Geography subjects in Social Studies education between the years 2006-2017, Öner and Öner (2017) determined that most of these theses were written at Gazi, Marmara, and Atatürk Universities, and the subjects predominantly investigated were concept teaching, teaching-learning processes, and method-technique topics. In Dilek et al. (2018) study, which examined Social Studies master's theses between the years 2010-2017, it was identified that subject-concept teaching topics are mainly studied in the theses. Duman and İnel (2019) studied the master's theses on Social Studies between 2008 and 2014 and found that theses mainly focused on teaching practices. Akaydin and Kaya (2015) examined research published in nationally indexed journals in the fields of Life Sciences and Social Studies between 2000-2013. They determined that teaching methods, value,

and skills training were mainly studied. In the study in which Güleç (2020) examined graduate theses on empathy between the years 2000-2019, descriptive data such as the distribution of theses by universities and the gender of the researchers were presented. In another study of the postgraduate thesis between 2008 and 2019 on literacy skills in the field of Social Studies education, Güleç and Hüdavendigar (2020) concluded that quantitative methods were mainly used in the theses and that the most studied sample was candidate teachers. Considering the existing literature, it is believed that a study of Social Studies graduate theses that examines skill instruction, techniques, processes, and content dimensions in depth will contribute to the existing literature. In this setting, no analysis of social studies teaching skills has been found in the literature.However, in the MEB (2018) Social Studies curriculum, competence areas and therefore, skills related to these areas are included. These competence areas are discussed under the headings of communication in the mother tongue, communication in foreign languages, mathematical competence and basic competences in science/technology, digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competences, cultural awareness, and expression. As can be seen, it is envisaged that students will gain many skills within the scope of these competence areas. This research is considered important in the literature in terms of revealing the skills to be studied in social studies teaching, determining the gap in the literature, and shedding light on the studies that will be done. Because it is necessary to classify the educational research in the literature and evaluate and synthesize their trends and research results. Thus, it is possible to reveal the points where the studies on the same subject support or contradict each other, as well as to prevent similar studies and lead to studies that take different perspectives into account (Sözbilir and Çalık, 2014). Hence, this study aims to investigate the trends in graduate theses on skills teaching in Social Sciences education between 2010-2020, identify the problems encountered by researchers during skills teaching, and present the suggestions for solutions to these problems. With this aim, answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. What are the research methods used in the thesis?
2. What is the distribution of the theses according to the grade levels studied?
3. What are the skills discussed in the theses?
4. Which learning-teaching processes are employed in skill teaching in the theses?
5. What is the duration devoted to teaching skills in the theses?
6. How are assessments performed in skill teaching in the theses?
7. What problems are encountered in the process of skill teaching?
8. What suggestions have the researchers made for skills teaching?

Method

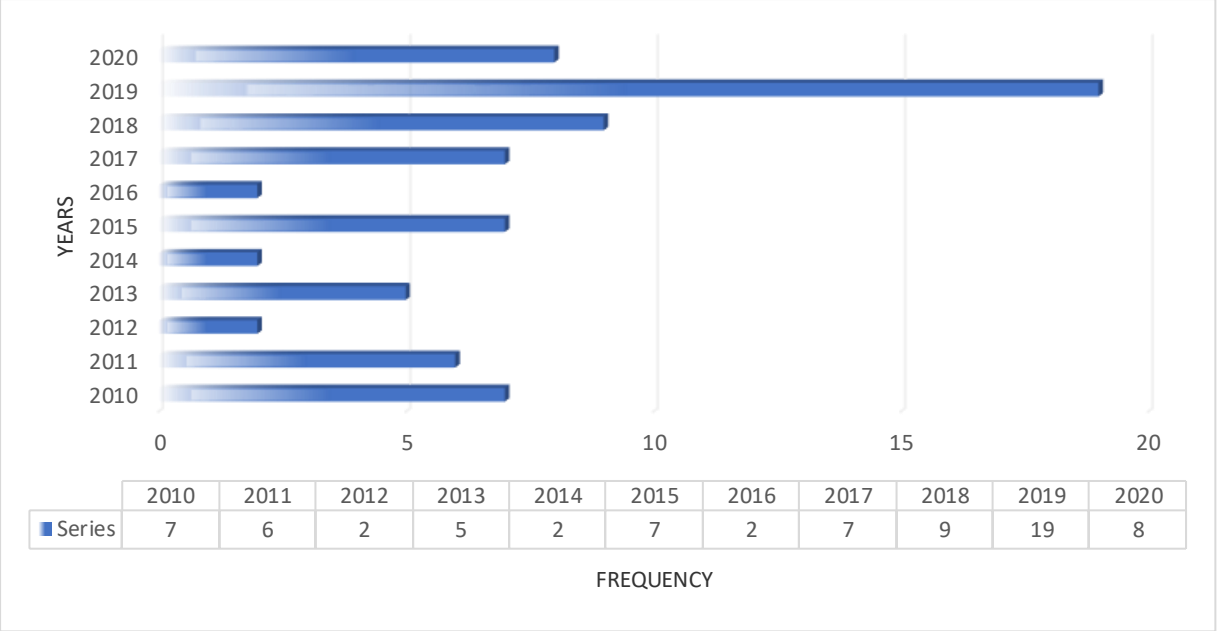
Research model

This study was carried out by adopting content analysis. Content analyzes are research syntheses that have an important role in disseminating researched knowledge and shaping future research, policies, practices, and public perception (Suri and Clarke, 2009 cited in Çalık and Sözbilir, 2014). According to Alk and Sözbilir (2014), content analysis can be broadly categorized into three types: meta-analysis, meta-synthesis (thematic content analysis), and descriptive content analysis. In this context, descriptive content analysis was used as this study aimed to determine the skills studied in theses in social studies teaching. Descriptive content analysis studies are systematic investigations that involve examining research studies on a specific subject, identifying common trends in the studies, and evaluating the results of research accordingly (Çalık and Sözbilir, 2014; Sözbilir, et al., 2012). In other words, the descriptive content analysis method is the in-depth examination and organization of qualitative and quantitative studies carried out independently on a particular subject or field. The purpose is to determine the general trends in the subject or field with the analyses made. In this way, it is considered that the results obtained will guide future studies on the subjects planned (Ültay et al., 2021). In this study, descriptive content analysis was utilized as the research model since the aim of analyzing the skills addressed in the Social Studies course at the graduate level is to determine the trends and to guide researchers, practitioners and decision makers. However, due to the large number of studies examined in descriptive studies, in-depth interpretation and synthesis are limited. This is the limitation of the research.

Data collection and analysis

This research included graduate theses based on skills teaching in the Social Studies course accessible at the Council of Higher Education National Thesis Centre. In this context, the keywords "Social Studies," "Social Studies Course," "Social Studies Teaching," "Social Studies Education," "Social Studies Curriculum," "Skill," "Literacy" were used in the search to access the data. These keywords were searched independently in the title, subject field and in the content. Thus, the data sources of the research were the theses obtained as a result of the document review. To this extent, a total of 74 master's and doctoral theses were analyzed. In the research, only

theses were preferred as data source. Theses are preferred in this research because of the scientifically controlled progression of theses from the beginning to the end of the process. There are also articles produced from theses in the literature. Therefore, considering the articles may result in two evaluations of the same study. However, taking the theses only due to the reasons mentioned above can be expressed as a limitation of the research. Within the scope of the introductory information of these theses analyzed, distributions were presented according to the years, thesis type and university. Accordingly, the dispersion of these theses by years is presented in Figure 1.



	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Series	7	6	2	5	2	7	2	7	9	19	8

Figure 1. The Distribution of Theses by Year

As demonstrated in Figure 1, the number of theses completed between 2010 and 2020 varies between two to 19 per year. The highest number of theses in skill teaching in Social Studies teaching was written in 2019 (19). This was followed by the years 2018 (9) and 2020 (8). In 2012, 2014, and 2016 only two theses were done in each year.

The dispersion of the type of theses investigated in the research is presented in Figure 2.

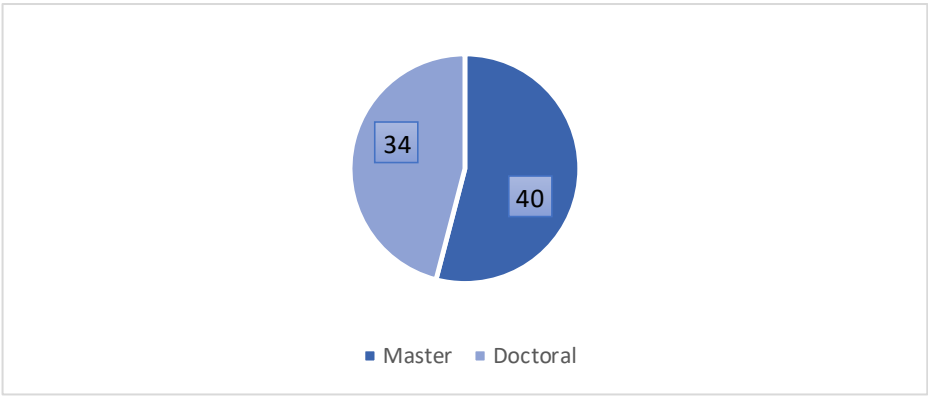


Figure 2. The distribution of the type of theses

As shown in Figure 2, a total of 40 master's theses in Social Studies course skills teaching were investigated. The number of thesis at the doctoral level was 34. The distribution of the theses according to the university in which they were completed is presented in Figure 3.

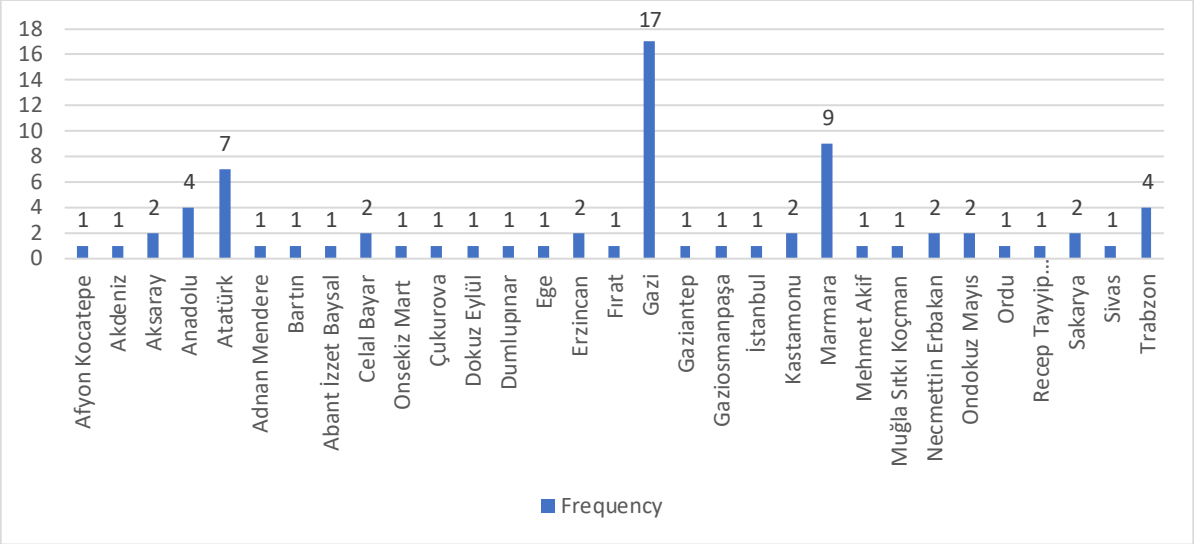


Figure 3. The distribution of the theses according to universities

As shown in Figure 3, the highest number of theses in skills teaching in the Social Studies course was published at Gazi University with 17 thesis. Marmara University followed this with nine theses, and Atatürk University was next with seven theses. In most other universities, one thesis was completed in this subject.

In addition to the introductory information on the thesis examined, the research method of the thesis, the grade level studied, the skill discussed, the learning-teaching process related to the teaching of the skill, the application time, the type of skill measurement, problems in skill acquisition and the suggestions made were discussed in the analysis of the data, which provide in-depth data about the thesis. MAXQDA analysis program was used to analyse the data. All thesis included in the research were investigated under these headings.

First of all, the researchers prepared a control form containing these titles. Then, the titles in this control form were entered into the MAXQDA analysis program as titles. The researchers examined all the thesis included in the research separately in the light of these titles. Later, the researchers came together and compared the results of the analysis. Conflicting situations were shown to another social studies expert. In the light of the discussions, the analysis was given its final form. Thus, the analyses were checked and the validity and reliability of the research was ensured. The data set was analysed by two researchers and finalized by making comparisons. Graphs and tables were used to present the findings arising within the scope of this analysis.

Findings

Findings on the Research Method

The findings of the research methods used in the thesis for gaining skills in the Social Studies course are given in Table 1.

Table 1 indicates that the thesis completed in skills teaching in the Social Studies course utilized quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Among the quantitative methods, experimental models were employed dominantly, and in the qualitative methods, action research type (12) of studies were primarily conducted, whereas in the mixed methods, embedded experimental designs (8) were mainly preferred. Three thesis conducted through the mixed method did not mention the mixed models they selected. In general, when the research model is considered, it was revealed that the control group pretest-posttest model (34) was mainly preferred as a research method for skills gains in the Social Studies course. It can be said that care was taken in selecting the research method in graduate studies to comply with educational application processes. In conclusion, practical studies aimed at gaining skills in the Social Studies course were predominant.

Table 1. The research methods used in the thesis

Research Method	Model	Sub Model	f
Quantitative	Experimental Model	Pretest-posttest with the control group	34
		Solomon	1
		Single group pretest-posttest	1
		Unpaired control group	1
	Survey Model		1
Qualitative	Action Research		12
	Case study		1
Mixed	Embedded experimental design		8
	Explanatory sequential design		4
	Embedded mixed methods design		3
	Triangulation design		2
	Dominant/less dominant design		1
	Concurrent transformative design		1
	Convergent parallel design		1

Findings on the Grade Level Studied

The distribution of grade levels in the thesis on skill teaching in Social Studies course is demonstrated in Figure 4.

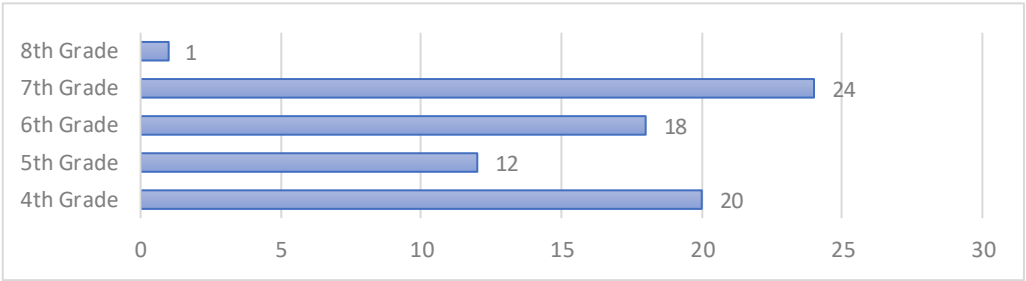


Figure 4. The distribution of theses by grade level

As indicated in Figure 4, it was determined that 24 thesis on skills teaching in Social Studies courses were studied at the seventh-grade level; that is, this class level was preferred the most. On the other hand, the least studied level among the thesesthesis was in the 8th grade with one thesis. This finding is because there are no Social Studies courses in the 8th grade. The survey model was adopted in that study, and the students' status of possessing the specified skill (map skills) was examined. It was also determined that although there was a Social Studies course, the under-preferred grade level as the working group was the fifth grade.

Findings on the Skill Studied

The skills addressed in Social Studies teaching are determined and classified. Correspondingly, the findings regarding the classification of the skills studied in the thesis are presented in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, it has been determined that all types of skills in the literature are included in the studies carried out at the graduate level for Social Studies teaching. In other words, it has been revealed that thinking, social,, and instrumental skills are discussed in the thesis, and many skills under these headings are attempted to be developed. As Table 2 indicates, the most frequently studied skill within thinking skills is critical thinking. It preceded the other common two skills of creative thinking and problem-solving.

The skills and their frequencies within social skills are also presented in Table 2. In the scope of social skills, the skills of social participation, communication, social skill, empathy, and conflict resolution were handled. It was determined that empathy skills come to the fore in social skills covered within. Communication and social skills followed this skill. It is noteworthy that social participation, among the skills specific to the Social Studies course, is understudied even though it is a course-specific skill.

Table 2. Skills addressed in the theses

Skills Category	Skills Addressed	f
Thinking skills (40)	Critical thinking	13
	Creative thinking	7
	Problem-solving	5
	Decision making	4
	Historical thinking	3
	Scientific process skills	3
	Self-organization skills	2
	Higher-order thinking skills	1
	Spatial visualization skills	1
	Conceptual understanding	1
Social Skills (14)	Empathy	6
	Communication skills	3
	Social skill	3
	Social participation skill	1
	Conflict resolution	1
Instrumental Skills (30)	Map Reading skills	6
	Spatial perception skills	5
	The place of change and continuity perception	3
	Drawing, reading, and interpreting graphs skill	3
	Time and chronology perception skills	2
	Entrepreneurship skills	2
	Historical literacy	2
	Field literacy	1
	Geographic skills	1
	Economic literacy	1
	Identification of location and coordinates skills	1
	Planning and organizing skills	1
	Finding directions skill	1
	Creative writing skill	1

The instrumental skills and their frequencies are also presented in Table 2. As shown in the table, the most frequently studied instrumental skill is map skills, followed by spatial perception skills. When the instrumental skills studied in social studies were examined in general, it was revealed that the skills for the geography discipline were dominant. However, it was determined that studies investigating literacies within instrumental skills were few. It is thought that this is because literacy skills were brought to the foreground after the 2018 Social Studies curriculum was implemented.

The review of the skills in the context of Social Studies teaching demonstrated that thesis were made mostly in thinking skills. In contrast, the fewest number of thesis were written for social skills. A possible reason for this finding might be the difficulties in assessing these skills. Moreover, in one of the thesis examined, all fields of skills were investigated from the perspective of active citizenship. While in some thesis, the skills under focus were used as teaching methods in improving students' academic success and attitudes, in most of the thesis, the skills were tried to be developed through a different teaching method. In other words, in some thesis the skills addressed were dependent variables, whereas in others, they were treated as independent variables.

Findings on the Teaching-Learning Processes in Skills Teaching

The findings suggest that various applications were implemented during skills teaching in the Social Studies course. These implementations employed in the skills teaching process were discussed under the titles model, approach, method, and technique. The models utilized in the skills teaching process are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. The models used in the skills teaching process

	Models	f
Skills Teaching Process	7E-supported Inquiry-Based Teaching	1
	Direct Instruction Model	1
	Quantum Learning Model	1
	Flipped Learning	1
	5E Learning Cycle Model	4

As pointed out in Table 3, the 5E learning cycle model, 7E-supported inquiry-based teaching, direct instruction model, quantum learning model, and flipped learning were practiced in some thesis during skills teaching in the Social Studies course. In these thesis, the effects of flipped learning on planning skills, the effects of quantum learning on self-organization skills, the effects of the direct instruction model on finding directions skills, the effects of 7E-supported inquiry-based teaching on critical thinking, and the effects of 5E learning cycle model on skills related to scientific processes were investigated. Of thes thesis, the study that utilized the direct instruction model was conducted with students with mental disabilities. The approaches used in skills teaching are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The approaches used in the process of skills teaching

	Approaches	f
Skills Teaching Process	Active Learning	1
	Conflict Resolution Training	7
	Argumentation-Based Learning	4
	Contextual Learning Approach	1
	Successful Intelligence Theory	1
	Inclusive Education Program	11
	Geographic Skills Development Applications	1
	Economic Literacy Program	1
	Empathy-Based Activities	1
	Object-Based Activities	1
	Differentiated Teaching	1
	Entrepreneurship Program	1
	Map Scale Use Skills Activities	1
	Identification of Location and Coordinates Skills Activities	1
	Marmara Three-Stage Development Model of DMS	1
	Orienteering Applications	2
	Authentic Learning	1
	Activities Based on Historical Empathy	1
	International Baccalaureate Program	1
	Reflective Thinking Approach	1

Many approaches were used during teaching skills in the Social Studies course, as indicated in Table 4. The active learning approach was utilized in the scope of historical thinking skills; conflict resolution training was used for communication and social problem-solving skills; argumentation-based learning was used in critical thinking, scientific process, and decision-making skills; contextual learning was used with conceptual understanding skills; successful intelligence theory was used in thinking skills; inclusive education program was used with critical and creative thinking skills; object-based activity applications were used for change, and continuity perception skills; differentiated teaching was used for a time, and chronology perception skills; map scale use activities were used with scale using skills; orienteering applications were used for spatial thinking skills and map literacy, and authentic learning was used in the scope of critical thinking skills. The International Baccalaureate Program was utilized to study citizenship skills. In addition, applications for the development of geographic skills, empathy, entrepreneurship, the identification of location and coordinates, the Marmara three-stage development model, historical empathy, and reflective thinking were used to build the skills addressed in the thesis. The methods used in the skills teaching processes are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The methods used in the skills teaching process

	Methods	f
Skills Teaching Process	Field Trip	1
	Demonstration Method	2
	The Use of Current Events	3
	Drama	4
	Problem-Based Learning	3
	Local History	1
	Case Study	3
	Cooperative Learning	7

As demonstrated in the table, various methods are used in skills teaching in the Social Studies course. These are field trips, demonstrations, the use of current events, drama, problem-based learning, local history, case study, and cooperative learning. In this regard, with local history, the skill time and chronology perception was studied; with cooperative learning, the social skill, social participation, social problem-solving, and communication skills were addressed; with the case study, the skills problem-solving, creative thinking, and critical thinking were studied; with problem-based learning, the creative thinking, problem-solving, decision making, and higher order thinking skills were handled; with the use of current events, the skills critical thinking and decision making were investigated; with field trips, the skill critical thinking was studied; with demonstration, the skill drawing and interpreting graphs was examined; and with drama, the critical thinking, social skills, empathy and communication skills were examined. The techniques used in the process of skills teaching are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. The Techniques Used in the Skills Teaching Process

	Techniques	f
Skills Teaching Process	Animation and Digital Map	1
	Geography Information Systems	1
	Digital Story	1
	Critical Reading	1
	Google Earth Application	3
	Concept Caricature	1
	Self-Monitoring Strategies	1
	Founding Mini Businesses	1
	Mobile Application	1
	Historical Novel Use	2
	Representative Image Use	4
	Web-Based Peer and Self-Assessment	1
	Children's Literature Products	1
	Statistics and Graph Use Techniques	1

As indicated in Table 6, many methods have been implemented during skills teaching in the Social Studies course. Accordingly, through statistics and graph use techniques, the skill of graph reading was studied; with children's literature products, the empathy skill was addressed; with web-based peer and self-assessment, communication skills were investigated; with representative image use, the skill of historical thinking was covered; by using historical novels, the skills creative writing and historical literacy were studied; by using mobile applications, critical thinking skills were dealt with; through founding mini businesses, the entrepreneurship skill was studied; with self-monitoring strategies, the skill of self-organization was addressed; with concept caricatures, the skill creative thinking was examined; with animation and digital maps, Google Earth and geographical information systems, the skills spatial thinking and spatial perception were studied; and through critical reading and digital stories, the skill critical thinking was examined.

The investigation of the thesis on skills teaching in the Social Studies course demonstrated that many models, approaches, methods, and techniques were used in the studies. While detailed information was provided about the teaching-learning processes in some of the thesis examined, there were no descriptions in some others. Concerning the reliability of the research, the lack of detailed explanation can be considered a limitation of the study. This issue seems important in providing guidance through experience for future researchers who intend to study skills teaching. Usually, more than one method is reported to have been used in the thesis, which explained the experimental procedures in depth. Moreover, in these thesis, many supportive materials such as worksheets, PowerPoint presentations, pictures, timelines, newspapers, reading passages, and online files were also used. In addition, what is especially considered important in the experimental or application process was explained in

detail in some thesis. In this respect, the situations to which researchers paid attention in their thesis mostly include practices such as receiving in-service training about the subject on which they what to make implementations, conducting needs analyses, obtaining expert opinions about the form, lesson plans, worksheets etc. they designed, basing teaching-learning processes on applications at which the students are competent, providing preliminary information to students about the implementation, and conducting a pilot study.

Findings on the Duration of Implementation

The duration of the implementations in the thesis towards skill teaching in Social Studies course was also analyzed. The length of the implementation periods in the thesis are presented in Figure 5.

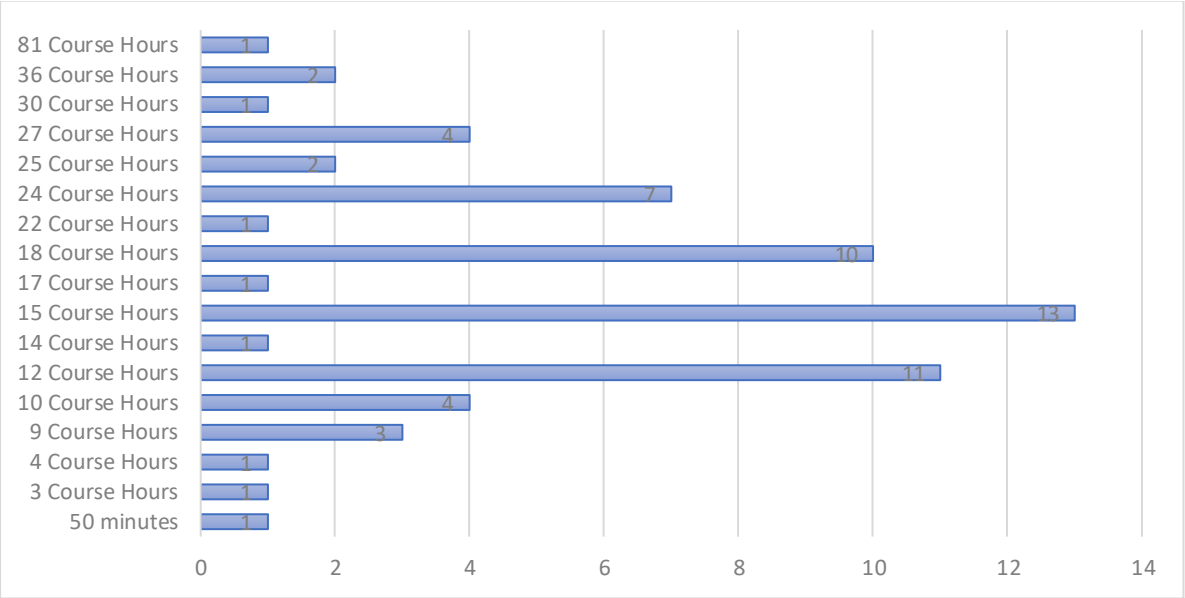


Figure 5. The distribution of implementation durations

As shown in the figure, the implementation periods in the thesis on skills teaching in the Social Studies course ranged between 50 minutes to 81 class hours. The most preferred duration was 15 class hours. 12 and 18 class hour procedures followed it. In most of the thesis, the rationale behind the implementation times was not justified. There were no discussions about whether the time allocated for the implementation was sufficient or not. When the nature of skills teaching is considered, it can be said that the implementation times should not be short. Despite this, some thesis did not mention the implementation times, while there was no implementation altogether in some thesis.

Findings on Assessment

The thesis examined whether the skills discussed in the Social Studies course were acquired were assessed by different methods and techniques. Within this scope, how the assessments were performed is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. The techniques and instruments used in the assessment process of the skills

		f
Way of Assessment	Test	42
	Scale	29
	Rubric-Graded Scoring-Check Lists	29
	Inventory	4
	Observation	7
	Interview	32

As demonstrated in Table 7, the skill acquisition statuses were determined through tests, scales, rubrics-graded scoring keys-check lists, inventories, observation, and interviews in the thesis studying skills teaching in the Social Studies course. In the thesis, the communication skills inventory and problem-solving inventory were observed to be used as inventories. With the rubrics-graded scoring keys-check lists, student products were tried to be analysed. Also, within this scope, students were asked to perform self-assessments, and their communication and

problem-solving scenarios were examined. The instruments developed were the creative writing and decision-making rubric, the drawing and interpreting graphs rubric, and the scientific discussion level graded scoring key. Scales were used in many of the thesis to assess whether the students gained the skills. These scales were the self-organization scale, conflict skill scale, creative thinking skill scale, historical empathy scale, historical literacy scale, social skill scale, problem-solving skills scale, motivational strategies scale, Marmara decision-making skill perception scale, empathic skill scale, critical thinking scale, critical thinking tendency scale, economy literacy scale, scientific creativity scale, and scientific thinking skills scale. The tests utilized in evaluating the skills in the thesis are the test of perceiving time and chronology, spatial visualisation skill test, Torrance creative thinking test, spatial thinking skill test, London Tower test, classical skills tests, conceptual comprehension test, Cornell critical thinking test-X level, and scientific research skills tests. Furthermore, achievement tests for the skills investigated were also devised. Besides, interviews and observations were conducted in some of these thesis. Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were preferred in the interviews. Observations were usually made throughout the implementation period. When these thesis were examined, it was seen that the same measuring tool was reapplied after a certain period to evaluate permanence in some of studies. Nevertheless, it was determined that in a vast majority of the thesis whether the skills turned into behavior was not demonstrated. In other words, student behaviors were not observed after the implementation process regarding skill acquisition. In addition, the problems arising from the assessment tool use were not discussed in the thesis, and in some thesis in-depth information (e.g., development process, reliability, and validity studies) regarding the assessment instrument was not provided. While significant differences were determined between the pretest-posttests of the experimental group in some studies, no significant differences were found between the experimental group and the control group in terms of the post-test. The lack of effect analyses in these thesis can also be expressed as a problem in terms of measurement.

Findings on Problems Encountered During Skill Teaching

In some of the theses examined, it was seen that the problems related to the skill acquisition process were recorded during observations and interviews with the students. These problems are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Problems encountered

		f
Problems Encountered in Skills Teaching	Having Difficulties during the Activities	4
	Boring Activities	4
	Facilities and Technical Problems	5
	Problems Encountered in Group Works	8
	Insufficient Time	3
	Age Level of the Students	1
	Forming Associations with Other Skills	1
	Exam Stress	3
	Homework Overload	1
	Not Doing Homework	2

Some problems occurred during the implementation process, such as students' having difficulties in the activities, students' perceiving the activities as boring, facing technical problems, the emergence of problems during group works, the insufficiency of implementation times, the inappropriacy of the skills to the age level of the students, the lack of relating the skill in focus with other skills, exam stress, assigning too much homework and not doing the assignments. It can be stated that these problems are usually related to the application process. In addition, when the problems were addressed, it was observed that the researchers gave less information about the problems they caused.

Findings on Suggestions

The examination of the suggestions made in the thesis on skills teaching in the Social Studies course yielded that these suggestions pooled under two headings, which are recommendations for stakeholders and recommendations for the learning-teaching process. In line with this finding, the results are demonstrated in Table 9.

Table 9. Suggestions

Suggestions in Theses		f
Suggestions about Stakeholders	Updating the Curriculum and Course books	42
	In-service Training	14
	Providing Infrastructure Support to Schools	14
	Revision of the Teacher Education Programs	11
	Revision of the Evaluation System	4
	Parent-Teacher Cooperation	4
	Getting Support form NGOs	2
	Being a role model to Students	1
Suggestions about Teaching-Learning Procedures	Use of Technology and Visual Materials	12
	Making Associations with Other Courses	7
	Student-Centered Education	5
	Increasing Implementation Time	4
	Using Literary Products	3
	Cooperation-Based Learning	3
	Covering Topics from Life	3
	Utilization of Social Problems	2
	Utilization of the Orienteering Sport	2
	Use of Games	2
	Utilization of the Education of Controversial Topics	1
	Use of the 5E Learning Model	1
	Utilization of the Discussion Method	1
	Club Activities at Schools	1

As shown in Table 9, in the thesis examined, the suggestions concerning stakeholders included providing infrastructure support in schools, increasing the visuals of books, reviewing the evaluation system, revising teacher training programs and providing them with in-service training, updating curricula and textbooks, and cooperating with family, school staff and non-governmental organizations. The most frequently mentioned recommendation was related to updating the curricula and course books. It was followed by providing school infrastructure support and in-service training to teachers. As demonstrated, the thesis acknowledged all stakeholders in their suggestions, from decision-makers to families. The suggestions about teaching-learning processes are also presented in Table 9. Regarding the learning-teaching process in the acquisition of skills, the suggestions of carrying out club activities in schools, extending application times, adopting a student-centered approach in the implementation process, using social problems as a learning tool, utilizing orienteering sports, using controversial subjects, associating skills with other courses, using games and literary products in lessons, collaborative learning, using 5E learning model and discussion method, making use of technology and visual materials and selecting topics from life were included in the thesis. The suggestion with the highest frequency was towards using technology and visual materials. The second most frequent recommendations following this were associating skills with other courses and implementing a student-centered approach. To summarize, considering the suggestions about the teaching-learning processes, it is possible to say that they were generally about the methods-techniques that can be employed in the lessons.

Discussion and Conclusion

According to research results, it was determined that the thesis on skill teaching in the Social Studies course were carried out in all three methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed. It can be said that the pretest-posttest model with a control group is frequently used in skill teaching. However, researchers using qualitative models predominantly preferred action research. This finding is similar to the research results by Kartal (2020), who investigated studies about Social Studies education at primary schools. It is possible to comment that action research is largely used in qualitative research studies in Social Studies teaching. The thesis examined to confirm that in the Social Studies course, there are mainly attempts towards practical applications in skills teaching, and importance is given to the teaching processes.

The investigation of the thesis outlines that the development of many skills in all three categories was studied in the scope of the Social Studies course. The skills studied the most were thinking skills in the first place, next came instrumental skills, and lastly, social skills were researched. It was observed that the skills related to social skills were remarkably under-investigated compared to the other skill groups. Six of the 14 research studies in this group were on empathy skill. It can be said that thesis on social participation, communication, social skill, and conflict

resolution were relatively few. Even though it is a skill specific to the Social Studies course, social participation was examined only by one thesis. Parker (2010) defines social skills as behaviors that enable the individual to build positive relationships with the other individuals that constitute the society and maintains that these skills have a substantial role in the individual's socialization process. In this respect, it can be said that neglecting these skills is a severe problem in the Social Studies course, which constitutes a crucial dimension of citizenship integration.

Among the skills investigated in the thesis, instrumental skills were studied primarily by focusing on abilities connected to geography. There are relatively few research on literacies among this group. It is believed that the new emphasis on literacies after the 2018 Social Studies curriculum is to blame for this deficiency. Literacies are viewed as abilities that are included in education policy and can influence education, which is something that must be considered (Aşc, 2009; nal, 2010). From this vantage point, it is possible to assert that future graduate dissertations should focus more on literacies.
It was determined that some of the thesis examined did not provide detailed explanations for the teaching-learning processes. In terms of the reliability of the research, explanations for interventional processes are considered important. Furthermore, it can be said that sharing research processes and experiences will be beneficial in guiding future researchers who will study skills teaching. In this regard, studies carried out abroad with researcher experiences shared in detail can be taken as an example.

In the thesis examined, it has been observed that the researchers mostly paid attention to issues such as in-service training, needs analysis, obtaining expert opinion for the developed materials, basing the teaching-learning process on the applications in which the student is active, giving preliminary information about the application process to the students, and piloting. This situation can have a positive impact on the quality of the studies.

In most of the thesis, no scientific justification was laid out about the time allocated for the implementation. Whether the implementation duration was sufficient for gaining the skill was also not explained. Moreover, in some thesis the implementation period was not stated at all. When the nature of skills teaching is considered, it has been observed that the application periods are relatively short. Studies are designed during which skill teaching is not possible when the time allocated is considered. Researchers work with students in schools of national education, and they strive to carry out their implementations without disrupting the education processes of the students. Likely, the course hours that the researchers could take permission for to conduct their studies was limited, and this situation was reflected upon the implementation lengths. Even though the insufficiency of the implementation times of the studies can be explained with this cause, it does not change the fact that it negatively affects the quality of applications. Establishing more research schools can be considered as a solution to this problem.

When the assessment tools used in the thesis are examined, a wide range of instruments and techniques such as tests, scales, rubric-rated scoring key-checklist, inventories, observation, and interviews were used to evaluate skills. While some of these instruments were readily available, the researchers developed some instruments for the research purpose. Nevertheless, it can be said that the problems faced during using these instruments were not shared with the readers. As mentioned above, this creates limitations about sharing researcher experiences. In some other studies, no accounts were even provided about the instruments' development process and reliability and validity information. Besides, although some results required asking additional questions, this seems to be ignored in some studies. To exemplify, in a study in which significant differences between the pretest-posttest measurements were found in the experimental group whereas no significant differences were detected between the experimental and the control group, an effect analysis that would reveal the level of effect of the experimental process performed was not made. Instead, the research was completed with the comment that the experimental process was effective. These situations pose a problem in terms of assessment and undermine the quality of the research. In the literature, similar problems were discovered in similar areas (Boztunç Öztürk et al., 2015; Gül and Sözbilir, 2015; Kaya Uyanık et al., 2017; Şahin and Boztunç Öztürk, 2018). Kartal's (2020) research shows that qualitative research on Social Studies teaching has similar problems in terms of data analysis.

The analysis of the thesis also demonstrated that the researchers were confronted with some problems during the process of skill teaching. Some researchers stated that they faced problems because the implementation time for the skill acquisition was insufficient. The fact that the time allocated for the implementations might be unsatisfactory in the thesis was mentioned above. The statements of the researchers support the comment about the deficiency of time for the implementations. The other problems expressed by the researchers in the process are the inappropriacy of the skills studied to the developmental level of students, the unsuitability of the activities prepared for the students' levels, and the failure of the activities to be interesting. It is possible to say that attention has been paid that the skills covered in Social Studies curricula are following students' development levels. In this

case, the problems in the studies are thought to be arising from the implementations. It might be put forward that the content and activities prepared by the researchers might have had an impact in the appearance of the problems mentioned. When these problems are examined, it can be said that the researchers did not discuss sufficiently the problems that may be caused by themselves. They avoided expressing these issues in their thesis.

When the suggestions made by the researchers at the end of the process were examined, the most mentioned recommendation in the thesis was updating the curriculum and textbooks. The subsequent common suggestions were eliminating school infrastructure deficiencies and providing in-service training to teachers. Apart from these, suggestions such as making associations with different disciplines during the teaching-learning processes and adopting a student-centered approach were also made. The meta-synthesis studies in the literature indicate that these problems are common (Deveci and Aykaç, 2019; Kartal, 2020). The recommendations given by the researchers at the end of the research were generally about using the teaching methods and techniques whose effectiveness they tested. As mentioned earlier, the studies do not include recommendations based on the experiences of researchers during the research process. It can be said that this is a significant deficiency in the national literature.

Recommendations

Research findings indicate that social skills teaching is the least commonly investigated subject in the thesis. Conducting more studies into the teaching of these skills can be suggested.

The research results reveal that the application times are inadequate in the process of skill teaching. It is thought that the limited hours of lessons that researchers allowed at schools have an impact on the emergence of this condition. For this purpose, increasing the number of research/application schools can be considered as a solution.

It was observed that some of the researchers did not share comprehensive information and validity and reliability measurements about the tools they used to assess skills and did not approach the analysis results critically. It is thought that care should be taken about these issues in terms of the quality of the research.

Another observation in this study is that the researchers did not include comprehensive information about the application processes in their thesis, did not address the problems that occurred in the process adequately, and did not share their experiences with the process. Regarding the reliability of research and guidance to future researchers, sharing research processes and experiences will contribute positively to the nature of the studies.

In this study, the skills investigated in the social studies course were examined in the scope of graduate thesis. Further studies may consider evaluating articles, papers, etc., written on this subject.

Descriptive content analysis was used as a method in this present research. Accordingly, different research studies can be carried out by choosing other methods.

This research focused on Social Studies in skills teaching. The status of skill teaching in different disciplines can also be demonstrated in other studies.

Author (s) Contribution Rate

The authors contributed equally to the article.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest regarding the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval is not required for this study.

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