Full Length Research Paper

The use of art activities in social studies classes

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The purpose of this research is to measure how effective the use of art activities is at achieving the goals of social studies program and to introduce a model practice that social studies teachers can follow. Accordingly, certain objectives were selected from among the main objectives of social studies program and the activities prepared for a 12-week period were carried out to achieve these objectives. The study group was comprised of 32 eight-grade students selected from a secondary school in the city centre of Antalya. For the selection of participants, an appropriate sampling method was chosen from purposive sampling methods. Action research, a type of qualitative research design, was adopted for the research design methodology. Data for the research was collected using qualitative data collection tools such as interview, observation and document analysis. Descriptive and document analysis were used for the analysis of research data. In general, the results indicated that art activities were effective in achieving the objectives of social studies program. Furthermore, it is important to make use of art subjects in social studies education and to conduct studies demonstrating examples from different branches of art.

Key words: Social studies, eighth-grade students, art, art activities.

INTRODUCTION

Art, in a personal point of view, is a means of expressing emotions, thoughts, dreams and creative efforts, a means of self-realization and exploration of one’s self-essence as well as an important socio-cultural dynamic with its integrating aspect of elevating communities and blending them together (MEB, 2007: 4). By feeding one’s cognitive and affective domains, art has an effect in two ways within educational processes. In this regard, not only does art develop intellectual competencies of individuals, but it also generates the driving power for "recognizing" their environment through affective experiences. So, the effect of art can be explained in terms of causing an "aesthetic awakening" (Sahasrabudhe, 2006; cited in Özemir, 2007: 77).

Art plays an integrative role in building cultural and social awareness. Many branches fall under the heading of art education and in this sense it intends to educate people. Art education is the whole educational effort that is made to rise to an aesthetic level in which a person's ability is able to express emotions, thoughts, creativity and impressions. As understood from its definition, the necessity for art education can be grouped under two main headings. One is to improve creativity and the other is to form an aesthetic attitude (Arpalı, 2008: 3; Erkan, 2010: 220). Individuals learn about the culture of the society they live in by means of art education. Individuals who respect and protect their cultural values, traditions, art and history transfer this culture to the next
generations. Material and moral values play a key role in the creation of a nation, in its future existence and in its steady progress. It is the art education that makes students know, learn and love their own culture and this develops them into individuals who protect and maintain these values. Providing art education alongside scientific education improves mind and intellectual abilities. Art education is the improvement of mental senses and intuitions (Düz, 2010: 12; Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2007: 24). Art education within general education is regarded as a significant discipline that contributes to one’s cognitive, affective and psycho-motor development. It aims to develop personality and to use potential at its maximum level by cultivating and expanding existing talents (Aslantaş, 2008). Moreover, education through art gives positive support to communities that are in danger of losing the value called aesthetic culture (Viola, 1936: 32). Instead of just a monotonous lecturing, art education calls for educational methods that will improve students’ skills of practice, ability to learn by experience and act independently and it also leads to the development of self-confidence and social behaviours. Synthesizing the knowledge they acquire from art and works of art, students grasp the importance of the culture and the age they study. They establish a connection with the past in order for us to understand the individuals and artists living in a certain culture in a certain age, to understand the ongoing age and the community that produces works of art. Art education aims to activate a child’s potential of artistic thinking and develops the creativity that is required for self-realization and self-responsibility (Morris and Obenchain, 2001; Buschkule, 2007). With education through art, it is aimed to increase the efficiency of educational processes and the quality of learning whereas, in the education for art the focus is placed on the development of artistic perception and skills by introducing students to various products of art (Özemir, 2007: 76). Branches of art can help provide knowledge for students and let them realize and display the cognitive capacities they already have. Art which reflects society in interaction with universal themes, allows students to interact with these universal themes and to gain access to the ideas in the art. An artist’s power of expression helps students to organize information, tell a story and share information with others that will be memorable for the students and their audience. Art assists students in constructing new knowledge and they interpret and discuss that new knowledge with their peers for pleasure (Morris and Obenchain, 2001).

Historically, art and creativity have always gone hand in hand with social and cultural structure. Natural conditions, climate, religious beliefs, economy, technology, family and environment seem to influence art, artist and creativity. It is not the major purpose of art education to “create good works of art” but to cultivate better individuals and better societies. As long as people are educated toward being good and descent, their perceptions, the way they think and their styles of expression gain meaning and value. In short, the purpose of art education is not to make all students an artist, but to equip them with aesthetic sensitivity and behaviours and also to cultivate conscious views through art classes given within the educational process. A conscious viewer picks the artist and excites him/her, thus art education fulfils its chief aim, that is, it generates a society that is satisfied aesthetically and artistically, and this society means individuals who are independent, pacifist, humanistic and integrated into the society, who renew themselves and derive the love of others and of their country from their own history, and who can accommodate themselves to modernisation (Düz, 2010: 13; Arpali, 2008: 3; Akın, 2006: 31). Students begin to understand how art reflects social values and how art is influenced by social, political and economic beliefs of a society when they have a chance of working on past works of art. An art object reflects its own time and cultural context of that time. In fact, most things that we know or guess about ancient cultures have their roots in art. How people, places and objects look like is stored in artworks. Materials and production techniques of past ages can give clues about geographic environment and social structure of those times (Manifold, 1995).

Art provides a proper perspective through which we examine and interpret the world we live in. In fact, children without a profound art education lack a balanced and comprehensive general education. It is argued in the literature that art also develops creativity, enhance personal development, regulates school attendance, sharpen reading skill and stimulate the left hemisphere of brain (Hurwitz and Day, 1995: 36; cited in Alakuş, 2003). For that reason, it is really important to begin art and aesthetic education at an early age. If not provided with art education in time, individuals cannot develop such attitudes as aesthetic sensitivity, respect for other people’s opinions, appreciation for other cultures, building awareness of protecting artworks and sharing a common value. Social studies courses are one of the most important subject that help students develop an artistic and aesthetic sensitivity at primary education level. Social studies classes may help students explore the content through art and interpret the past and compare it to present and also evaluate the probable impacts for the future, that is why it is important that art is one of the cultural elements of the society that needs to be included adequately in the social studies program. In addition, it should be kept in mind that, besides the culture of the society, cultural elements of other communities that have become common values of humanity need to be handled and studied carefully in social studies education (Akhan, 2011; Mercin and Alakuş, 2007: 17; Morris and Obenchain, 2001; Erçan, 2007: 9).

Shared values are one of the most important powers that connect individuals of a society. In order to develop societies and raise them to the level of contemporary
civilizations and to cultivate good individuals and societies, these shared values need to be taught to the youth as the guarantee of the future and they should understand that these values are entrusted to them. Furthermore, it is also essential to teach young people how to be critical of and reflect upon negative aspects of their society. This important task is mostly undertaken by social studies classes in primary education. Art is an important tool for social studies classes to teach common values and make young people to be critical of their environment. Social studies with its disciplines rooted in social life is one of the most important school subjects to provide art education for students in primary school, and art education is complement fields such as “Social Studies” and “History”. Research findings indicate that social studies, when integrated with disciplines like art, leave a more lasting effect. It is therefore, important that social studies teachers use art as extensively as possible for their lessons to be more popular and to have permanent effects on students (Akhan, 2011; Shoob and Stout, 2010: 133; Fowler and Mccullan, 1991; cited in Ercan, 2007: 16). Art education is one of the most reliable classes where training for creativity is prioritised, divergent thinking is advanced and every student is directed in accordance with his/her individual development and tendencies. Art education whose basic goal is to enable a child/young person to observe, search, inquire, experiment and reach a successful conclusion should continue in every stage of education (Buyurgan and Buyurgan, 2007). Social studies course, in this sense, is one of the most important school subjects to provide art education for children during primary education years. Social studies can utilize the arts as a way to discover content and to help students interpret the past, compare it to the present, and gather implications for the future (Morris and Obenchain, 2001).

Ercan (2007), in his study in which he examined social studies program in terms of teaching art subjects, worked on the subjects related to art education that were included in primary and secondary education programs and textbooks between 1924 and 2004. The author found that, art education subjects were not at the desired level although they varied according to school terms. In addition, he pointed out that visual elements were not emphasized adequately while teaching subjects and insisted that practices should be given priority instead of useless theoretical knowledge. In the light of these facts, this study aims to measure how effective the use of art activities is at achieving the goals of Social Studies program and to introduce a model practice that social studies teachers can follow. With this purpose in mind, the following objectives of Social Studies program were examined:

“As free individuals, students become aware of their physical, emotional characteristics and their interests, needs and capabilities.” (Article 1), “By comprehending basic elements and processes that create Turkish culture and history, students recognize that cultural heritage that raises national consciousness needs to be protected and developed.” (Article 5), “By questioning historical evidences belonging to different eras and places, students see the differences and similarities between humans, objects, events and facts and perceive the change and continuity.” (Article 10), “Students believe the importance of involvement and put forth original views for the solutions to individual and social problems.” (Article 11), “Being aware that they are a part of the humanity, students feel sensitive to issues concerning their country and the world.”(Article 17).

METHODOLOGY

Action research, a type of qualitative research design, was adopted for the research design methodology. Action research is a process in which a group of people encounter a problem, what they do to resolve the problem, then they see how well their efforts turn out and they try it again if they are not satisfied with the result; in short it is learning by doing and experiencing. Action research is a form of systematic and continuous inquiry undertaken to instruct educators and to improve their practices (O’Brien, 2003; Calhoun, 2002; cited in Aksoy, 2003: 477). Action research contributes to an increase in professional knowledge of teachers, thus, influencing learning quality of students (Aksoy, 2003: 485). Therefore, action research was used in this study to show social studies teachers the benefits of art activities in achieving the goals of social studies classes. In literature, the consensus on the implementation of action research is that it is a form of cyclical application occurring as action planning, implementation of the planning, data collection and analysis and reflective process (Kuzu, 2003: 427). Implementation phases of this study are as follows:

Implementation phases of action research

Social studies is a field of study that involves interdisciplinary integration of arts, literature and social sciences to promote effective citizenry (NCSS, 1993: 3). Social studies classes are where the students learn about themselves and their culture and contemplate on their own future and the future of the world; in these classes students also seek and find solutions while building an awareness of social issues. In this regard, in the action planning phase of this study it was decided to make contributions to social studies education by making use of common objectives of social studies and art education. For that reason, by interviewing with social studies experts and determining the goals to be attained through art education, it was decided which general objectives of social studies program would be emphasized. It was also decided that the study group would include eighth-graders who completed social studies classes and whose levels of attainment in objectives of social studies program would be able to be determined.

A series of art activities that would last 12-weeks were designed for the second phase of the study, that’s for the implementation of the planning process. Activities were performed 2 classes a week, which made a total of 24 classes throughout 12 weeks. One of the activity groups of Community Service Practices class was followed by the researcher throughout one semester. Activity plans were developed by the researcher in accordance with expert opinions. Activities were applied to students in the study group by three undergraduate students who were receiving Community Service Practices classes. Every week, the researcher met these undergraduate students just before the activity day and explained to them what should be done the next day. On the activity day, two students
served as an implementer, the researcher worked as an observer and the other student performed the task of reporting. The activities were conducted as follows:

In the lesson including art activities, firstly the work of art and the artist who creates it are introduced. After giving general information about the work of art, students are divided into groups and the groups are asked to invent and write stories about the emergence of the artwork. Acting out their stories, students tell about the emergence and the theme of the artwork. Finally the true story of the artwork is read out and a conversation is held about the contributions of the artwork to art, to society and to themselves. Below is presented the list of weekly subjects:

Week 1: In the first lesson, students focus on questions about what a work of art is or can be. Students are provided with information about sample works of art and their knowledge and experiences regarding works of art are shared in the classroom. In the second lesson, students carry out some activities which are about "The Scream"; Edvard Munch's most famous work of 1893 which represents the scream of nature.

Week 2: Students carry out activities regarding Guernica, a well-known painting which was completed by Pablo Picasso in 1937, which depicts the bombing of Guernica, a village in northern Spain, during Spanish civil war.

Week 3: Activities of this week are focused on The Tortoise Trainer (Kaplumbağa Teribiyesi), a painting by Osman Hamdi Bey which was crafted in 1906. This painting is considered to represent a desperate scholar in an exhausted state while trying to modernize a backward society.

Week 4: Students are engaged in activities about a work by Ibrahim Callı, Zeybek (Zeybekler). Created in 1923, this painting depicts Turkish War of Independence.

Week 5: Students perform activities related to The Statue of Artemis, which was built in the 1st century BC in ancient Rome as a symbol of abundance, fertility, power and is now displayed in the Ephesus Museum.

Week 6: Activities of this week are about The Statue of Liberty; being a gift to America by the French to commemorate the 100th anniversary of American Independence, the statue has been the symbol of the USA since it was built in 1886 on Liberty Island in New York.

Week 7: This week covers activities about Orkhon Inscriptions (Orhon Abideleler), the first known alphabet of Turks written by the Göktürks in Old Turkish alphabet in the early 8th century.

Week 8: During this week, students do activities related to National Forces and Atatürk Monument (Kuvay-ı Milliye ve Atatürk Anıtı); As the biggest monument of Turkey and the third biggest in the world, this monument was built by Tankut Oktem at the request of Manisa Governorship.

Week 9: Students do activities related to What Men Live By, a short story written by Tolstoy.

Week 10: Students carry out activities about Homeland or Silistria (Vatanım, But Silistre) by Namık Kemal.

Week 11: Students are asked a week before to bring belongings from home that tell about their families and their past. All the belongings are categorized and then collections are made. A mini ethnography museum is created with the participation of the class. In the second hour, ethnography museums are introduced through slide show and their importance and role in the transfer of cultural heritage is explained. Students are instructed about cultural heritage and the importance of its protection.

Week 12: Students are grouped in the first hour. Each group is provided with colourful play dough and cardboard. Groups are asked to prepare a miniature model of the community they live in. They are told that all models will be put together and the whole will represent the society they live in. When ready, models are put together and exhibited. In the second hour, a conversation is opened about such issues as the society they live in, their place in that society, collaboration in the society, the reasons for social problems and the importance of establishing appropriate communication in the society. Finally, students carry out an overall assessment of the activities they have performed and the works of art they have seen throughout the implementation.

Study group

The study group is comprised of 32 eighth graders (13 girls, 19 boys) from a middle school in the centre of Antalya. For the selection of participants, an appropriate sampling method was chosen because the implementation phase of the study could be time consuming and the study was conducted within the scope of activities as a part of Community Service Practices course which was one of the first term courses included in the social studies undergraduate program of third-year students.

Data collection tools and data analysis

For the implementation procedure of action research, the phases of data collection, analysis and reflective process were explained. Research data was collected using qualitative data collection tools such as observation and document analysis. Initially, prior to the implementation, a standardized open-ended interview was conducted with the students in the study group in order to identify their capabilities concerning the certain objectives that were selected from among the main objectives of social studies education. Besides the researcher, this interview was conducted with the help of three other researchers who completed their doctoral program in social studies education. Interviews were carried out by the pair of researchers to save time; one of them interviewed the students and the other, meanwhile, recorded the interview data. At the end of the interview, students were asked to draw the picture of the most important social problem and come up with a solution to this problem. These practices were repeated at the end of the process with the same students in the study group.

The action steps and the data collection tools in the study were prepared in accordance with the views of experts in the areas of social studies, fine-arts education, Turkish language, assessment, evaluation and all the implementation steps were arranged taking the views of experts into account. Data collection tools were applied to some other eighth graders who were not in the study group to test the feasibility of these data tools. Finally, all the implementation steps were revised and then finalized by two other researchers apart from the classroom teacher and the researcher. Two data analysis approaches were used for the analysis of the research data; descriptive analysis and document analysis. Data collected via descriptive analysis was summarized and interpreted based on the predetermined themes. The obtained qualitative data was quantified and the data was presented along with frequencies. Statements and views of students were directly quoted and presented in the study. Descriptive analysis aims to present the findings in an arranged and interpreted manner for the readers. Document analysis, on the other hand, involves the analysis of written materials that contain information about target facts and events (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006).

Research data came from various sources such as written forms of records obtained from interviews conducted with students before and after the study, reports on the classroom observations made by the researcher and the reporting student, pictures that students drew at the beginning and end of the activities and written responses of students. All collected data was organized and coded by the researcher and two other different researchers and the coding were compared and the items agreed and disagreed with were determined. In the phase of analysis of the data acquired
through students’ pictures and written responses were firstly grouped under similar themes and then they were classified taking into account their comments on the pictures. Analysis of data was made separately by the researchers and these analyses were compared afterwards. As suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994), the reliability calculation formula was as follows: P (Agreement Percent) = (Na (Agreement) / Na (Agreement) + Nb (Disagreement)) x 100. The reliability was calculated to be 86%. Besides, the results were supported by examples of student responses. Each student in the study group was assigned a number and their responses were presented with these numbers (1G: 1st Girl Student, 1B: 1st Boy Student).

FINDINGS

The results of the research were categorized into three themes: “I'm talking about myself”, “I'm talking about my past” and “I'm talking about the society”. Results were presented in tables with frequency distributions and summarized below the tables using direct quotations from participants. (Table 1)

I'm talking about myself

During the interviews made prior to the implementation, students in the study group were first asked to introduce themselves by answering the question “Could you tell us about yourself?” It was observed that 24 students introduced themselves talking about their physical characteristics. Some students introduced themselves as follow:

“I am tall with brown hair. I have a normal weight. My hair is wavy and long. My eyes are hazel. (G5)”, “I am a bit plump and a quite tall girl with brown eyes and black hair (B4)”. 8 students, on the other hand, used their general qualities (Physical characteristics, interests, talents and plans) while describing themselves; “I am 1,66 m tall and have black hair, I am a person who loves doing sports, watching movies and travelling and who wants to be a doctor. (B2)”, “I am brown-skinned and of normal height, I look a bit thin. I like using a computer. I am interested in books. I would like to be a psychological counselor and have beautiful house. (G12)”

After activities were carried out, students were asked again to answer the question “Could you tell us about yourself?” 12 students mentioned their emotional characteristics as well as physical ones. Some of them said:

“I am brunette. I have long straight hair. I am of medium weight. I suppose I look like my mother. I am funny, humorous and energetic. I am oversensitive. (G9)”; “I am tall and vigorous. I adore football. I feel terribly upset and I mind it when we give away a goal. Other times I don't mind anything else. I am quite extrovert and cheerful (B7)”.

The remaining 20 students mentioned their general qualities while describing themselves. It was seen that this time they gave priority to their emotional characteristics. Here are some responses:

“I am brown-skinned and of medium height. I have a quick temper but I easily forgive. I am very impatient. I would like to go to a good university and get a good job in the future. I feel happy when I listen to music or read a book (G1)”, “I am a little short. I have light brown eyes. I feel deeply sad about beggars in the streets and about the news on death. I feel like doing nothing when I get bad marks in the exams. I love playing the guitar. I love using a computer and listening to music. I would like to be a well-known doctor (B14)”.

When the students were asked to describe themselves, it was found that they focused more on their physical qualities or appearance in the first interview. It is worthy of note that they also included their emotional and general characteristics when the same students were interviewed at the end of 12 weeks. The reasons could be that during the activities students communicated with other students more easily, they got to know themselves better and they were more comfortable in expressing themselves. (Table 2) During the interviews made prior to the implementation, students in the study group were mostly asked about who and how they get in touch. Students were asked how they treat people of different thoughts while having a dialogue with them. All students gave the response that “I respect people of different thoughts”.

### Table 1. Frequencies for students are talking about themselves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before Implementation</th>
<th>After Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f (Girl)</td>
<td>f(Boy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical characteristics</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and emotional characteristics</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General characteristics</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When they were asked before the implementation why they respect those who think differently,
Table 2. Frequencies for the reasons why students respect differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before Implementation</th>
<th>After Implementation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f (Girl)</td>
<td>f (Boy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because those who respect are respected</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be listened by others</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As every human being is different</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For an environment of tolerance</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>For a problem-free society</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

20 students said “those who respect are respected”. 12 replied that “We need to respect others if we want to be listened to by others.” “I can’t expect to be respected if I don’t respect others (G6)”, “If we want to make ourselves listened to by others, we also have to listen to them when they talk (B19)” said some of these students.

After implementation, students were asked why they respect people of different thoughts and 2 students replied “those who respect are respected”, 3 said “as every human being is different”, for 12 students the reason was “an environment of tolerance” and 15 of them went for “a problem-free society”. The followings are some examples of their responses:

“Everybody has his own ideas. You cannot change them even if you try hard. So, we need to respect those who think differently (G12)”, Life would be better if everyone were nice to each other. So, we should not look down on them just because they think differently, on the contrary, we should be tolerant of them (B8)”, “Problems in a society get worse just because people do not show respect for each other. Evils in a society would disappear and everybody would be happier if people respected each other (G11)”. 

All students voiced that they are respectful of different ideas when they were asked how they treat people of different thoughts while having a dialogue with them. When they were asked why they do so, students, before the implementation, said that showing respect will allow them to be respected and they have to do so in order to be listened to by others. After the implementation, students expressed that every individual deserves respect as they are different and that they respect people of different ideas to establish an environment of tolerance and to get rid of problems of societies. Based on these facts, it can be suggested that students were influenced by the theme of “respecting different thoughts/ideas” in the art activities. The art, in the vision for art activities course, aims to cultivate individuals who can establish effective communication and express themselves in a way one understands and makes understandable himself and his environment (MEB, 2007: 3). In this regard, it can be suggested that art activities under the theme “I’m talking about myself” can make it possible to achieve one of the general objectives of the social studies program, which is “As free individuals, students become aware of their physical and emotional characteristics, their interests, needs and capabilities”, and these activities can also help students to express themselves and to respect the differences of others. Art activities can be benefitted from the attainments of Grade 4th and Grade 7th social studies units called “I introduce myself” and “Communication and Human Relations” respectively.

I’m talking about my past

During the interviews before the implementation students were asked to explain what they understand with cultural heritage and what their responsibilities are for cultural heritage and it was seen that all of the students managed to describe cultural heritage and gave examples of physical, or tangible, cultural heritage. They described their duties for cultural heritage as not damaging those properties of physical cultural heritage and protecting them. Some said:

“They are historical artefacts from the past. Our duties towards these artefacts are to protect them and warn those who cause damage (G12)”, “They are historical buildings and artefacts that tell about ancient civilizations. We should protect them. We shouldn’t damage them simply by saying they are old anyway. Historical artefacts are in danger of extinction. We should take care of them (B3).”

The interviews with students after the implementation showed that students have developed awareness of non-tangible cultural heritage and they have become more conscious of the fact that they themselves also have to take care of cultural heritage in order for it to be respected, protected and handed down the next generations. Some students shared their ideas as follows:

“Cultural heritage might be everything from our ancestors. Historical buildings, artefacts, belongings and customs and traditions are invaluable. For instance, we should never forget our important festivals and days. We must keep our customs and traditions alive by continuing them
Table 3. Frequencies for the opinions of students on the remains of the past

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remains from earlier times</th>
<th>Before Implementation</th>
<th>After Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f (Girl)</td>
<td>f (Boy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They excite me</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They interest me</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They make me sad</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They make me bored</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They don't interest me</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was observed that all students could describe cultural heritage when they were asked what it was, and they saw their duties towards cultural heritage as “protecting and not damaging”. It can be suggested that after the implementation, students also built awareness of non-tangible cultural heritage and they were aware that they were also responsible for passing it on to the next generations. (Table 3) Prior to the implementation, students were asked what they feel or think and why they feel/think that way when they see remains from earlier times (pictures, documents, things in a museum etc.). 10 students replied “They interest me”, 3 said “They make me sad”, 7 students found them boring and said “They make me bored” and the rest, 12 students, said “They don’t interest me”. Here are some of their ideas:

“Ancient objects interest me a lot. Various questions come into my mind like “Where was it found? Whose was it? I try to get answers from museum officials (B18), “It makes me sad to see those remains. Because they are worn out and some of them have been stolen. The fact that humans do not protect them will make them disappear one day. (G13), “These remains sometimes bore me a lot. Not only do I feel bored but they also remind me of old dusty stuff when I visit a museum (B2), “They are completely uninteresting because we no longer use them (G4), “I am interested in ancient objects. They are useless for us. Now, those who find and sell them make money. We just glance at them uninterestedly (B8)”.  

In the interviews conducted following the activities, nine of the students said “They excite me” and the other 23 reported “They interest me” regarding the remains from early times. Some of the replies are as follows:

“Seeing things like pictures, belongings and artefacts makes me very excited. We get lots of information about the past. They each have a story. I am curious about that. (G6), “Now I find old objects interesting because we cannot learn everything from books or the internet. They give us information. They show us how humans have evolved and how they made progress. (B12)”.  

When students were asked what they feel or think and why they feel/think that way when they see remains from earlier times (pictures, documents, things they see in a museum etc.), we clearly saw that their responses before and after the implementation changed in a positive way. Students' responses prior to the implementation such as “they make me sad, they are boring for me, and they do not interest me” have changed in the positive direction. It may be thought that letting students think that all the remains of the past have a story, giving them a chance to see that they bear the traces of their owners and the society of those times and making them develop empathy by acting out can lead students to know about them in the first place and then feel empathy and love. A person loves what he knows and takes care of what he loves. Therefore, we should introduce students to cultural heritage in an accurate way and make them love it in order to raise their awareness of cultural heritage. Only this way, will they understand that the remains of the past are not old and dusty and cultural heritage entrusted to them. (Table 4)  

Students were demanded to share their opinions on historical events and to give their reasons during the interviews before the activities took place. 12 students in the study group said “I take a lesson from them for my life”, 17 students replied “I find them interesting” while 3 found them “uninteresting” and 4 participants said “They don’t interest me”. Here are some ideas shared with the interviewer:

“When I study historical events as a part of lesson I find them boring. I’d rather read and listen to explore the historical events (G10), “As historical events occurred a long time ago, they don’t interest me. I find them more interesting when watched as a movie (B9), “I take a lesson from historical events because history repeats itself (G2), I have always found historical events interesting. They have many mysteries to be explored like..."
Table 4. Frequencies for the opinions of students on historical events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Events</th>
<th>Before Implementation</th>
<th>After Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f (Girl)</td>
<td>f (Boy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I take a lesson from them</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find them interesting</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I find them uninteresting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They don’t interest me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the interviews conducted following the activities, 15 of the students said "I take lesson from historical events" and the remaining 17 reported "I find them interesting". Some of the ideas are:

"People should take lessons from the history. We can be more successful if we understand the history. I also learn from the history because there is much to learn from historical events (G7)". "Every moment of the history is full of many interesting events and figures. I would love to explore and learn about them much (B2)"

Based on their opinions on historical events, it is possible to suggest that attitudes of students towards historical events are more positive than those towards remains of the past. Anyway, remains of the past constitute a part of history. However, historical events are introduced to students both as a part of their curriculum and in the novels they read or through movies. It can be suggested that students came up with the ideas "I take a lesson from them" and "I find them interesting" as they were more familiar with them in their everyday life. 7 students, on the other hand, stated their opinions as "I find them uninteresting" and "They don’t interest me". After all the activities carried out, all students responded positively for the historical events. One of the most significant attainments of art activities is that they help individuals to develop empathy. Knowledge of the past and a feeling of empathy area prerequisite to understanding present day. This is quite beneficial for students to know about and understand themselves. In this point, it can be argued that it could be advantageous to make use of art activities while building the skill of historical empathy especially for social studies classes.

One of the general objectives of art activities is to help students to assimilate the culture they are raised in and to enhance their cultural development by creating opportunities to face various arts. In arts education, this mostly emerges as museum culture. Cultural education within museums intends to achieve the goals such as understanding oneself and others in time and space, maintaining cultural heritage, associating the past to the present or the present to the future in a meaningful way, understanding, protecting and keeping alive the cultural assets and ancient works, knowing and understanding one’s own culture and other cultures in a tolerant and multi-perspective approach (MEB, 2007). This aspect of arts education accords closely with the following objectives of social studies course; "By comprehending basic elements and processes that create Turkish culture and history, Students recognize that cultural heritage that raises national consciousness needs to be protected and developed." and "By questioning historical evidences belonging to different eras and places, students see the differences and similarities between humans, objects, events and facts and perceive the change and continuity." Accordingly, it can be claimed that making use of art activities in social studies classes, especially in the learning domain of Culture and Heritage, will be highly beneficial for students. (Table 5)

I’m talking about social problems

Prior to the implementation, students were asked to draw the picture of the most important social problem and come up with a solution to this problem. As the most serious social problem, 12 students drew the picture of war and 8 students pointed out terrorism; for 8 students it was theft and traffic accidents were considered to be the most important social problem by 4 students. As a solution to the problem of war, student came up with ideas such as showing the beauties of peace, being kind-hearted individuals and feeling pity for children. For terrorism, student produced solutions such as educating soldiers, reinforcing the army and taking security measures in regions under terrorism threat. For students, theft as a social problem could be resolved by certain methods like stopping evil-minded people, increasing the penalties and providing security guards for homes. As for traffic accidents, some solutions offered by students were to be careful while issuing driving license and to stop the traffic monster within us. Some of these students responded as follows:

"War is a big problem destroying the nations. It is the children who are most affected by it. Children either die or lose their parents during a war. It is very important socially to stop wars (G3)". "The worst of the social problems is terrorism, I think. There are humans who kill
innocent people mercilessly. They should be told that what they are doing is wrong. What a pity for those innocent people (B7)”. “It is theft that comes to my mind when I think about social problems. They become happy by stealing the things that people have gained by working or the things that are valuable to people. Those humans who do that cannot be good. They should be punished severely (B13)”. “Traffic accidents are an important problem for me. Good drivers can also die in accidents due to other disrespectful and senseless drivers. This is, in my opinion, an important problem. These reckless drivers therefore, should be stopped immediately (G8).” (Figure 1).

Students were asked to draw the picture of the most important social problem for them both before and after the implementation and also to offer their solutions to get rid of this problem. For this theme, there was a significant difference between pictures of students before and after the implementation. Before the activities, war, terrorism and theft, as the most important problems, were expressed through pictures whereas environmental pollution and global warming were emphasized after activities were conducted. Only 4 students did not change their minds about their social problem, which was traffic accidents. One student saw traffic accidents as a social problem after the implementation. In the end, another interview was held with 10 randomly-selected students whose ideas differed after implementation. Students were shown their first and last pictures and asked to explain the reason for difference. Their responses demonstrated that the social problems they expressed in their first pictures (war, terrorism and theft) were still considered to be the most serious social problems by the students. They stated that they prefer red to suggest the solutions to which they can personally make contributions. They reported that they cannot do much about social problems like war, terrorism and theft and about the solutions to these problem but they can make some contributions towards the solutions to problems such as environmental pollution and global warming

Art is a reflection of human being and society. Art activities help the creation of a society that is composed of sensitive, creative and productive individuals who can

Table 5. Frequencies for the social problems for students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Problems</th>
<th>Before Implementation</th>
<th>After Implementation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f (Girl) f (Boy)</td>
<td>f (Girl) f (Boy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>3 9</td>
<td>-  -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>2 6</td>
<td>-  -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>5 3</td>
<td>-  -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic Accidents</td>
<td>3 1 2 3</td>
<td>9 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Pollution</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>9 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Warming</td>
<td>- -</td>
<td>2 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

energy. Besides, using deodorants is also harmful. If we want to save our world, we should do our share (B7)”. “Traffic accidents, I think, is an important issue. Lots of people lose their lives. Pedestrians and drivers should know and obey the traffic rules to resolve traffic problems. Those who violate the rules must be punished severely (B13)”. “We can mention environmental pollution as a social problem because there is no one not suffering from this problem in the community. As the number of inconsiderate people grows, the environment will be polluted more and more. They keep on polluting and damaging the nature without thinking about their future (G8).” (Figure 2).
Figure 1. Some drawings by students prior to implementation

Terror by student B7

War by student G3

Theft by student B13

Traffic Accidents by student G8

Figure 2. Some drawings by students following implementation

Environmental Pollution by student G3

Traffic Accidents by student B13

Global Warming by student B7

Environmental Pollution by student G8
think critically and express themselves. People make sense of what is going on around them through art, which is a universal language. Besides, caring about personal and social values, showing respect for universal values, behaving ethically and showing tolerance and respect for differences and diversity are all among the goals of art activities (MEB, 2007). Accordingly, art activities seem to be influential in attaining the following objectives of Social Studies program; “Students believe the importance of involvement and put forth original views for the solutions to individual and social problems.” and “Being aware that they are a part of the humanity, they feel sensitive to issues concerning their country and the world.”

DISCUSSION

The present study indicated that, in general, the use of art activities is influential in achieving the goals of social studies program. The results revealed that at the end of 12 weeks students based on the theme “I am talking about myself” talked about themselves by mentioning their emotional and general characteristics and they communicated more easily and expressed themselves more comfortably. Besides, it is also possible to suggest that they are affected by the theme respect for different ideas in the art activities. In short, it can be said that art activities under the theme “I’m talking about myself” can make it possible to achieve one of the general objectives of the social studies program, which is “As free individuals, students become aware of their physical and emotional characteristics and their interests, needs and capabilities”, and these activities can also help students to express themselves and to respect the differences of others that they interact with.

Secondly, it was found that when the students were asked to explain, within the scope of “I am talking about my past”, what the cultural heritage was, it was seen that all of the students managed to describe cultural heritage and they explained their duties for physical cultural heritage as not damaging those properties and protecting them. Another finding was that after the implementation students in the study group built awareness of non-tangible cultural heritage and they became aware that they were also responsible for passing it on to the next generations. Moreover, when the students were asked what they felt or thought about the remains from the past and about the historical events and why they felt/thought that way, it was seen that their responses before and after the implementation changed distinctly in a positive way. Accordingly, it can be claimed that making use of art activities in social studies classes, especially in the learning domain of Culture and Heritage, will be highly beneficial for students.

In the final stage, regarding the theme “I am talking about the society”, students were asked prior to and following the implementation to draw the picture of the most important social problem and come up with a solution to this problem. The results indicated that there was a significant difference between the pictures drawn before and after the implementation. Before the implementation, war, terrorism and theft as the most important problems were depicted in the pictures whereas pictures showing environmental pollution and global warming were presented by the students as social problems. When students were asked to explain the reason for difference, they said that they felt helpless about the social problems like war, terrorism and theft and their solutions while they believed that they could suggest solutions to problems such as environmental pollution and global warming. Based on these results, art activities could be helpful in attaining the following objectives of Social Studies program; “Students believe the importance of involvement and put forth original views for the solutions to individual and social problems.” and “Being aware that they are a part of the humanity, they feel sensitive to issues concerning their country and the world.” To sum up, taking into consideration the research findings it can be asserted that 8th grade students who completed Social Studies classes reached the objectives of Social Studies program in general and achieved a better position than they were already in thanks to the 12-week art-based program.

These findings were supported by the results of other similar studies in literature. For instance, Şahan (2004) found that multi-domain art education given to 6th grade students yielded positive results in terms of achievement level and long-term attitude and knowledge. It was observed that students developed confidence in their own creativity and expressed themselves better. Üstüner (2007) found that interdisciplinary art education helped individuals become aware of their own capabilities, find opportunities to improve their personalities and facilitate their perception of abstract concepts. It was also reported that thanks to art education individuals will be able to get a different perspective on life and develop sensitivity towards inter-cultural differences and diversity. Delier (2007) taught English through interdisciplinary approach based on art-based education. He reported that due to the practices used in art education academic achievement of students increased, their ability of self-expression developed, their visual efficacies improved and their viewpoints on works of art changed. Kayalioğlu (2012) discovered that the Method of Multi-Domain Art Education improved composition skills of 8th graders significantly. Korkmaz (2010) reported that the study of comparative picture analysis carried out in art education led to the perception of cultural values with their similarities and differences and increased participation of students in their lessons. Özteke (2004), in his study conducted with high school students, discovered that different teaching methods helped raise the awareness of historical environment among students. Tuzlak (2004) found that 6th, 7th and 8th grade students did not have much knowledge about art works in their immediate environment yet they thought art education would create
the environment they would like to live in. Özdemir (2007) found that works of artists presented to 8th grade students were useful in the development of their creativity and in the production of artworks of various kinds.

Depending on the results of this study and the similar studies in the literature, it can be suggested that art activities can make significant contributions to the courses in which these activities are conducted. Therefore, art activities can be said to be a good way to make Social Studies education more effective. There occurred problems concerning time and selection of the class as the activities in the present study were carried out within the framework of Community Service Practices – a course in the Social Studies undergraduate program of third-year students. Teachers might find the class time limited while doing art activities in Social Studies classes. Moreover, doing activities in crowded classrooms could be challenging for them. Teachers need to create opportunities within the class time in order to carry out art activities in accordance with course objectives when the contributions of these activities are taken into account. Activities recommended in this study are also flexible enough to adapt to the number of students in the classroom. Teachers should not hesitate to use art and many other tools that will enable students to achieve the course objectives of Social Studies program.

These activities should also be used actively by teachers as they not only entertain students but also improve their learning. For that reason, it would be helpful that social studies program is revised for teachers to benefit from them as much as possible. Social studies teachers need to be supported by model practices, in-service seminars and academic studies. Social studies teachers, who should keep themselves updated on current events especially on cultural developments, need to follow art events in their city, visit museums and make use of these environments for their classes. Bulletins can be released for them to follow all sorts of art events and to provide guidance in excursions students make together with their parents. Art events at schools can be announced to students via posters. Within the bounds of possibility, art events that parents can also attend can be integrated into the shows that occur at the end of schools terms. In addition, various art events and exhibitions that primary and secondary school students can attend should be supported by the Ministry of National Education and schools should be encouraged to take part in these organizations. Competitions which include various branches of art should be held to discover students, particularly those with unusual talents. All kinds of children’s art efforts should be supported and their works should be exhibited in an art centre to be built in schools.

CONCLUSION

This study is important as it sheds light on the contributions of art activities to social studies education. In addition, it is thought that the present study provides teachers with suggestions on activities from different branches of art, yet there aren’t enough academic studies on the use of art subjects in social studies classes. Activities that will guide teachers can be introduced through academic studies. There is a need for studies with both theoretical and practical nature. Studies that will be conducted with students of different age and from different socio-cultural level could be enlightening for social studies education. It should be kept in mind that social studies course is one of the most important ones that prepare students for life. Art should be regarded as a powerful way as well as an entertaining job and an effective short cut while preparing students for life.

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