

HABITS, TENDENCIES AND VIEWPOINTS OF STUDENTS TAKING SOCIAL STUDIES COURSE (4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades) REGARDING READING

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ABSTRACT

It can be stated that today's societies have complex structures and the matters of continuous learning and human education are very important in information society. The information age has a lot of effects on state life, economy, and family life. For an individual to have a life style which s/he desires, education is an important tool in providing necessary pieces of learning. School is a part of life. It is targeted to train good humans, good citizens who are good at their jobs and having internalized and adopted all the qualities of the nation of which he is a member. Since our habit of reading books is not sufficient, there will not be a healthy transfer to next generations. There is a crisis of values. However, at the same time, it is essential to train happy individuals. In this context, that children should get to know about first themselves and then things around them and the nature is gaining importance. The best way of this is reading. Purpose of the Study: The present study aims to reveal the habits, tendencies and viewpoints of the students taking the course of social studies (4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades) with respect to instructional and non-instructional reading, comprehension what is read and to include families', school's, teachers' and students' expressions and practices about themselves. This study is a descriptive one. Population and sample: The population of the study includes students, teachers at elementary schools and student parents. The 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th classes where there are students taking the course of Social Studies and the students in these classes were selected randomly. In this context, the study included 2000 students enrolled in the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th classes in the 2005-2006 instructional year, 50 teachers and 162 student families. The statistical calculations and studies made can be listed like this: For the analysis of independence, frequency tables, correlation analysis, chi-square test; for the comparison of more than two groups, Kruskal Wallis Test; for comparisons of paired groups, Mann-Whitney U Test were used. Moreover, with using one-way variance analysis, the independent-samples t test was applied. As a result, it has been determined that the factors such as socio-economic level, class level, sex, family, teacher affecting the acquisition and habits, tendencies and viewpoints of students taking social studies course (4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades) regarding reading.

Key words: habits, tendencies, student, reading

INTRODUCTION

It can be stated that today's societies have complex structures and the matters of continuous learning and human education are very important in information society. The information age has a lot of effects on state life, economy, and family life. For an individual to have a life style which s/he desires, education is an important tool in providing necessary pieces of learning (Senemoğlu, 2004). Education is of importance in societies' maintaining their existence, and in individuals' acquiring information, skills and values during the processes of socialization and acculturation. The target of educational institutions is to get students to acquire basic information. During elementary education, children are faced with many issues that they are supposed to overcome. The quality of education given during elementary education reveals the need to develop skills such as children's becoming equipped, learning about ways of accessing information, being able to solve problems and making healthy decisions in globalizing world. Moreover, *until school age children start to internalize some social concepts in family environment as well.*

Turkish National Education, too, in this process, started to make an effort to renew itself. In the process of education and teaching, the process of the ability to use information rather than memorizing information, phenomenon, concept, principles and processes come to the fore. In this context, concepts of skills and values gain importance. Elementary school students start to learn about the phenomena, concepts and generalizations about society, region, country and world. In this period when basic skills and values are tried to get acquired, the course of social studies is the course undertaking this function most. The general aim of the course of Social Studies is to develop individuals' skills related to their ability to adjust to events, situations and their environments effectively, successfully and healthily. The very knowledgeable human composing the most valuable human type of old periods has left its

place to the human knowing where and how to find information when necessary. In elementary education, the course of Social Studies composes one of the basic sources. The definition of the Social Studies course in the 2005 Social Studies Teaching Program (Yetkin & Daşcan 2006) is like this: “Social Studies is an elementary education course aiming to help individuals to actualize their social existence; reflecting such social sciences as history, geography, economy, sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, political science and law and the topics of knowledge of citizenship; including the combinations of learning areas under a unit or theme; examining the human’s interaction with his social and physical environment in the context of past, today and future; and established by moving from mass teaching understanding”. The Social Studies program attaches importance to training students as individuals knowing the national identity, universal values, social problems, their rights and use them, fulfilling their responsibilities.

The mental, physical and emotional development characteristics of students in the age groups of ten and fourteen are important. The new program shows a spiral character. According to children’s physical, mental and affective characteristics, topics are taught by expanding. Instructional and non-instructional times are dealt with as a whole and the continuity of behaviors is achieved. At school teachers and outside school families have responsibilities to children with respect to setting an example for them and giving them help with managing their times. School and student families establish a stable learning environment for the acquisition of skills and values by setting up continuous communication and cooperation. The reading skill is the first step in many matters. Bastiani (1989: 84-89) in a study, listed what is included in student families’ helping lists as reading-writing, sport activities, computer studies, use of tools and equipment, playing games with children and giving supervision in excursions. With respect to learning and comprehension of what is read and discussion in school environment, Pollard and Triggs (2000:64,69,72), in their study, reached such conclusions as there were regular daily silent reading hours in classroom programs, the students spent times on discussions about what is read, 2/3 of the group at the 5th and 6th years rarely did this, and could not find books clearly giving them pleasure and increasing their reading experiences very often and generally there was not much progression in reading beyond basic skills. Studies have been made on multiple-intelligence applications specified by Gallavan and Kottler (2002) as eight strategies combining Social Studies and reading.

School is a part of life. It is targeted to train good humans, good citizens who are good at their jobs and having internalized and adopted all the qualities of the nation of which he is a member. It covers such processes as self, memory, decision-making, reasoning, language and thought and there is interaction in learning. In our day, it is clear that there are social changes. However, there is a communication which cannot be said to be the production of popular culture and the number of words used is decreasing. Since our habit of reading books is not sufficient, there will not be a healthy transfer to next generations. There is a crisis of values. However, at the same time, it is essential to train happy individuals. In this context, that children should get to know about first themselves and then things around them and the nature is gaining importance. The best way of this is reading.

Problem statement

“What are the habits, tendencies and viewpoints of the students taking the course of Social Studies (4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th grades) with respect to reading?”

Sub-problem statements of the study

1. What are the Students’ Thoughts about their Comprehending What They Read?
2. What are the Students’ Attitudes toward Reading?
3. What are the Students’ Occupations during non-instructional time?
4. What are the Activities that the Students Do Most and Least during a Process of One Week During non-instructional time? What is the Place of Reading among These Activities?
5. What are the Topics at which the Students Expressed They are Very Good?

6. Are There Any Differences Between the Students According to Socio-Economic Status, Class Level, Teachers and Families, If Yes, What Are They?

Purpose of the Study

The present study aims to reveal the habits, tendencies and viewpoints of the students taking the course of social studies (4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades) with respect to instructional and non-instructional reading, comprehension what is read and to include families', school's, teachers' and students' expressions and practices about themselves.

METHOD

This study is a descriptive one. As it is known, survey models are a research approach aiming to describe a past or present situation as it was/is. In this study, too, since it is aimed to evaluate the present situation, the model used in the study is included in the survey model.

Population and sample

The population of the study includes students, teachers at elementary schools and student parents. The 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th classes where there are students taking the course of Social Studies and the students in these classes were selected randomly. In this context, the study included 2000 students enrolled in the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th classes in the 2005-2006 instructional year, 50 teachers and 162 student families.

Data collection tools

In this study, as data collection tools, the scales and questionnaires prepared and whose reliability and validity were tested by the researcher beforehand were used. These are;

- Questionnaire of Teacher Opinions Regarding Education-Teaching,
- Scale of Teacher Opinions Regarding Education-Teaching,
- Questionnaire of Teacher Opinions and Observations Regarding Student Attitudes-Behaviors and Education-Teaching Competency,
- Student Self-Evaluation Scale,
- Measurement Tool Directed at Students' Acquiring and Using Contemporary Information,
- Attitude Test Toward Students' Acquiring and Using of Contemporary Information,
- Measurement Tool Directed at Student Families,
- Student Families Interview Questions Questionnaire, Behavior Determination Test

Data Analysis

In the process of entering the quantitative data obtained in the study into the computer and analysis, SPSS program and Excel program were used.

The statistical calculations and studies made can be listed like this: For the analysis of independence, frequency tables, correlation analysis, chi-square test; for the comparison of more than two groups, Kruskal Wallis Test; for comparisons of paired groups, Mann-Whitney U Test were used. Moreover, with using one-way variance analysis, the independent-samples t test was applied.

FINDINGS

This section includes the findings obtained with regard to the habits, tendencies and viewpoints of the students taking the course of social studies (4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades) with respect to reading. The findings were interpreted by considering the sub-problems of the study and general evaluations were made. Over the attitude test results regarding contemporary information acquisition and using, whether

there are generally significant differences between the low, middle and high socio-economic status students was examined with using one-way ANOVA.

Comprehension Achievement Test

Over the achievement test results in the context of comprehension, whether there are significant differences between the low, middle and high SES students was examined with using variance analysis for each test item. On the whole of this test composed of a total of 6 items, whether there is a significant difference at .05 level.

Table 1: Comprehension Achievement Test ANOVA Results

	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean	F	Significance Level
Between-Groups	183,023	2	91,512	61,21	0,000
Within-Groups	2985,616	1997	1,495		
Total	3168,640	1999			

Generally, it was observed that there were differences between SES's in terms of comprehension. When looked at the source of the difference between the students with respect to comprehension, it was observed that there were differences between the low-high and middle-high SES at p-level of 0.05, but there were no significant differences between the low and middle SES students. In this case, it can be thought the qualities of the teachers servicing at the schools at low SES level have an effect on this. According to the schools, there are significant differences between all the answers given by the students to questions related to reading passages I and II. In the study made by Pollard and Triggs (2000: 64, 78), it was found that since both the students did not spend time on discussion after having read the books and they could not find books to give pleasure and to increase reading skills, they could not achieve much progress in reading beyond basic skills. According to the schools, it was found that there were significant differences between the ways of students' getting benefited from computers.

Students' Opinions About Their Comprehending What They Read

Table 2: Students' Opinions About Their Comprehending What They Read

QUESTION	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Total Percentage
Very Good	32	1,6	1,6
Good	169	8,5	10
Moderate	891	44,6	54,6
Poor	908	45,4	100
Total	2000	100	

When the total values regarding the students' opinions about their comprehending what they read are looked at, 54, 6% of the students appear to think that they are at "moderate" level and over. It can be thought that, at the point of whether they are objective, the students' having discussions and evaluations related to their comprehension levels and the content of a text which they read with other friends, might help in reaching healthy results. In the study made by Pollard and Triggs, it was found that children do not have discussions sufficiently with respect to what they read.

Students' Attitude Test ANOVA Results according to SES

The obtained results were established to have statistically significant differences at significance levels of 0.05 and 0.01. To reveal the source of this difference, comparisons were made on the basis of questions. In this context, over the attitude test results regarding contemporary information acquisition and use, whether there are significant differences between the low, middle and high SES students was examined with using one-way ANOVA for each test item.

It was observed that there was a difference in 33 items of this attitude test composed of 44 items at p-level of 0.05, but there were no significant differences in the other 11 items. Moreover, one of the items where the low, middle and high SES constitute the source of differences is the item “22- *I like silent reading*”.

Parents’ guidance should be in the direction of guiding children, increasing self-confidence, and achieving harmony. Parents need to have their children acquire some habits as well. The first of these is the “reading habit” (Elmacioglu 2000: 75- 81). In the evaluation made in accordance with the students’ liking to read and silent reading, it was observed that the low SES students did not feel a desire about this matter. In England, too, in 1998, at primary schools, reading hours were put. Reading modification model includes reading to the teacher, one-to-one reading and self-reading. The development of reading ends with students’ starting to read on their own. Most children think that they do this most of the time. In the classroom programs, there are regular, daily silent reading hours. In the classroom, when students make mistakes and errors, they are diffident about not being able to meet the expectations of theirs, their teachers’, their families’, their friends’ (Pollard and Triggs, 2000).

Students’ Attitudes Toward Reading

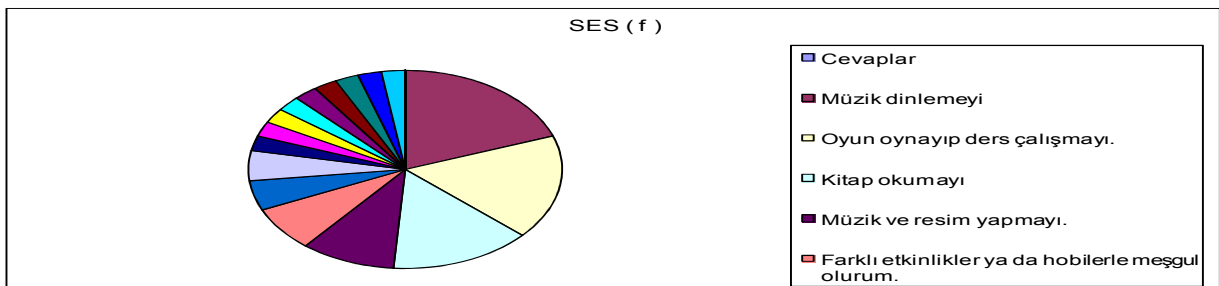
Table 3: Indicating Students’ Attitudes Toward Reading

QUESTION	Frequency (f)	Percentage(%)	Total Percentage
I read only the books attracting my attention	820	41	41
I like reading every kind of written sources	840	42	83
I cannot finish the books which I start	183	9,2	92,2
I do not like reading	157	7,9	100
TOTAL	2000	100	

According to the table directed at the students’ attitudes toward reading, a great majority of the students (42%) state that they like reading “every kind of written sources”. However, it is observed at the same rate (41,1%) that there are students reading only the books attracting their attention. Regarding reading, it is observed that the number of the students having attitudes such as “I cannot finish the books which I start to read” (9, 2%), “I do not like reading” (7, 9%) is rather low. In the classroom programs, there are regular, daily silent reading hours. The students’ explanations yielded the result that they do not spend time on discussion after reading books. 2/3 of the 5th and 6th grade students stated that they did not do this either “at all” or “very often”. Some of them clearly stated that they could not find books to give them pleasure and increase their reading experiences. Generally, the children’s explanations prove that not much progression has been achieved in reading beyond basic skills” (Pollard and Triggs, 2000: 65)

Kinds of Students’ Occupations During Non-Instructional Time

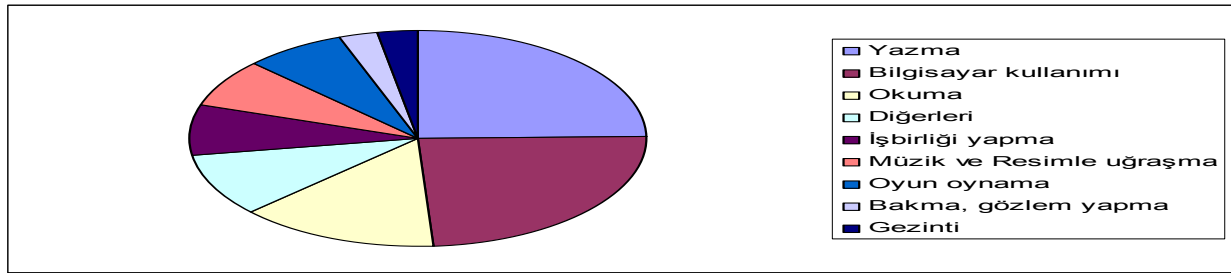
According to the answers given by the students to the question “What do you like doing most during non-instructional time?”, it is observed that most of the students at all the SES levels prefer to listen to music, read books, play games, painting pictures etc. When looked at the answers given by the students at the high SES level, it is eye-catching that there are different answers such as “playing computer games, playing the guitar, swimming, meeting friends and going to the cinema, going out to eat, playing the violin and piano, walking around with my dog, doing ballet, etc.”



Every child is different from one another. Children of the same age have very different capabilities, growth rates, interests and needs. Education and teaching should provide individuals with development and raising possibilities appropriate for their characteristics. Beech (1985) state that 40% of the primary school students try to understand rather than speak and can transfer what they hear or read into their brains. As a teacher, I find it useful to discuss individual learning styles, children's studying styles and to practice them (Cited by Dean 2000: 27).

Table 4: Activities Students Do Least During the One-Week Process Before/After School

Activities	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Writing	531	26,6
Using a computer	515	25,8
Reading	308	15,4
Others	201	10,1
Making cooperation	160	8
Being interested in music and painting	155	7,8
Playing games	151	7,6
Looking at, making observation	62	3,1
Walking around	60	3
Total	2000	100



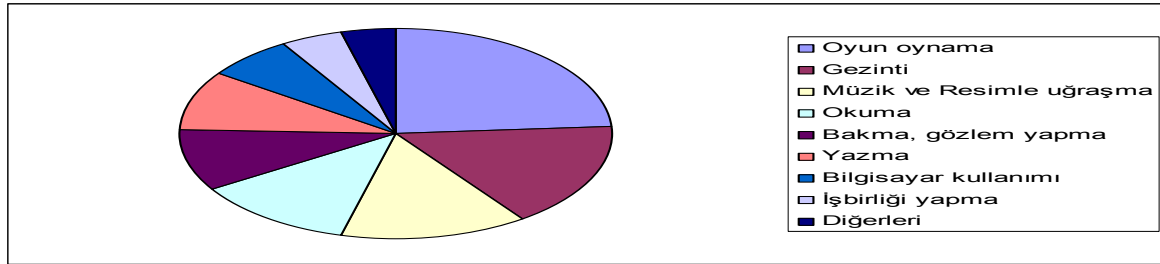
Before/after school, it is observed that the students prefer mostly to “write” (26, 6%), then to “use a computer” (25, 8%), and thirdly to “read” (15, 4%). The activities of “being interested in music and painting” (7, 8%) and “playing games” (7, 6%) are performed at almost the same rate. It is observed that the activities requiring cooperation have the least share. Students’ watching TV for a long time and playing computer games affect negatively their creativity, book reading habits, and fulfilling responsibilities in some situations. Between the activities that the students perform during the one-week period of time, significant difference was found according to Chi-square values. As a result of the study made by Alexander (1997) in England, too, a similar result was found, that is, the students allotted 33% of their time to writing, 28% of it to working with tools, 24% of it to reading, 20% of it to resting or care, and 14% of it to walking around and strolling.

Galton et al (1998), in their study made in small village schools, reached the results that the students spent 33% of their time on listening, 28% of it on writing, 17% of it on making observations, 10% of it on drawing, 7% of it on reading, and 5% of it on speaking, and the main activities were resting, observing and writing (Pollard and Triggs, 2000: 52). It is observed that the activities related to writing and reading ranked the first. However, in this study, using a computer ranked the second. The hypothesis that using a computer has replaced works on reading can be accepted.

However, related to the acquisitions targeted in the Social Studies program, a computer-assisted instruction might be done to develop reading habits.

Table 5: Activities Which Students Do Least During the One-Week Process besides School

Activities	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Playing games	479	24
Walking around	319	16
Being interested in music and painting	287	14,4
Reading	237	11,9
Looking at, making observation	185	9,3
Writing	183	9,2
Using a computer	135	6,8
Making cooperation	87	4,4
Others	86	4,3
	2000	100



As understood from the table, 24% of the students specified the activity of “playing games” as the least frequent non-instructional activity which they perform. In the second order was the activity of “walking around” (16%), and in the third was the activity of “listening to music and being interested in painting pictures”. It was observed that the rate of those who were interested in activity requiring “making cooperation” was between 4-5%. According to these results, approximately a quarter of the students allotted very little time to playing games. The rate of those who allotted time to reading books was low. Students’ participating in lessons and education life with activities they like and appropriate for them will increase the permanence in learning. Among the activities that the students performed within one-week period of time was found a significant difference according to Chi-square values. According to the answers given by the students to the question “What do you like doing before/after school most?”, it is observed that majority of the high SES students prefer to listen to music, read books, play games, paint pictures, etc.

One of the question of sequential type in the measurement tool directed at the students’ acquiring and using contemporary information is the one related to the students’ opinions about their comprehending what they read. The answers of two thousand students were listed as follows.

Issues at Which Students Express They Are Very Good

Table 6: Related to Topics at Which Students Express They Are Very Good

QUESTION	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Total Percentage
Searching	304	15,2	15,2
Reading–Writing	418	20,9	36,1
Social Activities (Sport)	804	40,2	76,3
Manual skills	474	23,7	100
TOTAL	2000	100	

According to the table related to the matters at which the students stated that they were good, “social activities and sport” ranked first with a percentage of 40,2, “manual skills” ranked second with a percentage of 23,7, “reading-writing activities” ranked third with a percentage of 20,9% and searching ranked fourth with a percentage of 15,2%. When looked at total values, it appeared that the students were good at the matters with a rate of 76,3%, other than “manual skills”. It is necessary to meet the needs of teachers and students and train students with inquisitive personality (Çeliköz & Çetin 2000).

Students should be motivated in the direction of their abilities and interests by their teachers and families so that they can develop reading, writing and searching skills.

Student Families

Relationships were found between the number of books which families own and parents' education levels, reading books, buying a daily newspaper for home, owning a computer, making weekly plans for their children.

In the correlation analysis made regarding the 42nd item of the answers by the students' families (homework amounts and their characteristics), positive relationships were observed between the variables at 0.05 level. The Spearman Coefficients varied between .19* and .16*. There is a relationship between the families' thinking that the students' homework amounts and their characteristics were not a problem and fathers' reading books and their appreciating their children's doing good things. It can be thought fathers' encouraging their children might have an effect on the solution of problems related to homework assignments.

In the correlation analysis made with regard to the number of the books which students' families own, except for the 31st item, there are usually positive correlations between the number of books and the variables mostly at 0.01 level. With Q31 at 0.05 level it was negatively correlated, and with Q34 at 0.05 level it was positively correlated. The Spearman coefficients varied between .16* and .42**. It was found that the number of books that families own was correlated with parents' education levels, reading books, buying daily newspapers for home, owning a computer and making weekly plans for their children.

In the correlation analysis made with regard to students' families' answers to q-42 item (homework amount and characteristic), positive relationships were observed between the variables at 0.05 level. The Spearman Coefficients varied between .19* and .16*. There was a relationship between the families' thinking that there were no problems regarding students' homework assignments and their characteristics and fathers' reading books and their appreciating their children for doing good things. It can be thought fathers' encouraging their children might have an effect on the solution of problems related to homework assignments.

While the mothers of high SES students read books, those of low SES students did not. It was the same for fathers. In terms of owning a library, the 5th grade students' families ranked highest, the 6th grade students' families ranked lowest. The rate of the sixth grade students' mothers reading books and that of mothers not reading books were equal. It was established that the fathers reading books were the 4th and 5th grade students' fathers. Those not reading books were the 6th grade students' fathers, and those sometimes reading books were the 7th grade students' fathers.

Teachers

Table 7: Correlation Analyses Regarding Teachers (Spearman Correlation Coefficients)

	"In our day, a teacher needs to behave more authoritatively"	"The Social Studies lesson creates excitement and happiness in me"	"I teach the social studies lesson consciously"
Having a library	.33**	.42**	-
Supplementary handbooks	-	-	.35*

* 0.05 level, **0.01 level

In the correlation analysis made regarding the item "The Social Studies course creates excitement and happiness in me" of the measurement tool related to teachers' education and teaching, using books and reading, there were positive correlations between the questions at 0.01 level. The Spearman Rank

Correlation Coefficients varied between .38** and .42**. In the correlation analysis made with regard to the item “The number of students participating in class discussions and activities in the Social Studies lesson is low”, while a strong positive relationship was found between student participation and regular, daily, silent reading hours at 0.01 level, a negative relationship was established between student participation and the use of the technique of verbal expression at 0.05 level.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

- ✓ When looked generally, it was observed that high SES students liked silent reading while low SES students did not like it very much.
- ✓ However, in students who do not like reading books and incline to violence, negative changes regarding contemporary education are observed.
- ✓ Students perform activities such as studying lessons with their brothers and sisters, playing games, folk dances, reading books, painting pictures.
- ✓ While high SES families read books, low SES families do not. It is the same for fathers.
- ✓ In terms of owning a library, 5th grade students’ families rank highest, 6th grade students’ families rank lowest.
- ✓ The rates of the sixth grade students’ mothers reading and not reading books are equal.
- ✓ It was found that the fathers reading books were the fathers of the 4th and the 5th grade students, those not reading books were the fathers of the 6th grade students, and those sometimes reading were the fathers of the 7th grade students.
- ✓ It was determined that the number of the students participating in class discussions and activities in the Social Studies lesson is low in classes where verbal expression, which is a silent reading hour, is attached importance.
- ✓ Relationships were established between students’ performing team works with their friends, doing homework assignments in time, eagerly participating in activities, preparing for lessons, being self-confident, charitable, obeying rules, being responsible and their liking silent reading.
- ✓ Related to this matter, it is necessary to assess very well the negative situations emerging especially in students such as behavior disorders, going away from cultural values, decrease in respect to teachers, not liking reading books.
- ✓ The teachers should arrange reading activities for male students stating that they are “good” at comprehending what is read in Social Studies lessons. Male students’ reading habits should be developed more.
- ✓ Teachers should take into consideration the male students’ being good at “social activities and sport” and the female students’ being good at “manual skills” during instructional and non-instructional activities.
- ✓ It was established that the students were very poor at comprehending what is read. In this context, effective reading strategies should be attached great importance.
- ✓ Families play a great role in students’ acquiring the habit of reading books.
- ✓ However, for the acquisitions targeted in the Social Studies program, reading habits can be developed and computer-assisted instruction can be done.
- ✓ It is essential to create an education-teaching environment, which is student-centered and at the same time boosting, enforcing and transferring intelligence.
- ✓ Since the information society demands individuals educated in accordance with its own conditions, training these individuals becomes important. Related to this matter, it is necessary to assess very well the negative situations emerging especially in students such as behavior disorders, going away from cultural values, decrease in respect to teachers, not liking reading books. Having students acquire these in a healthy way will help to end these worries.
- ✓ Especially mid-SES families are more worried about this matter. Families should be active in reading books.
- ✓ While the families attach more importance to such values as generosity, social relations, patriotism, and sharing, the teachers attach more importance to the values of self-esteem, discipline, favoring change.
- ✓ With the reading habits created by considering children’s curiosity, interest and needs, children: taste the senses of appreciation, acceptance, being listened to and being valued. And this

increases their self-confidence and self-esteem levels. Otherwise: Lack of productivity, lack of acceptance, despise, and frustration become prominent. First awarenesses then sensitivities develop. It is essential to be solution-oriented.

- ✓ Misconceptions should be noticed.
- ✓ Individual differences, accordance with the child, entertaining, locality, it is necessary to move with the reasoning of first learning for reading then reading for learning.
- ✓ Metaphor should be made regarding reading.
- ✓ Grounds, where writings read can be discussed, should be created.

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