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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the usefulness of the teaching activities prepared for effective utilization of museums and historical places in the context of grade seven social studies teaching to increase the efficiency of teaching-learning processes. Designed as an action research, the current study includes 34 learning activities to be used in nine different venues. These activities implemented with the participation of 36 pupils in a public secondary school located in Manisa, Turkey to be used before the visits at school, during the museum or historic site visits and after the visits. Observations (researcher's journal, field notes, and video recordings), interviews (focus group and individual) and document analysis (student diaries, their portfolios and activities) were used as means of data collection. Content analysis has been conducted to analyze the data obtained through observation and interviews, while document analysis has been conducted on student products. The results of the research indicated that the implementation of the developed activities had positive outcomes in many respects. As a result of the implementation processes, the students have gained historical knowledge, developed historical and local awareness about Manisa, and understood the importance of historical and cultural values by means of comparing the past and present. Additionally, they have gained consciousness to protect and preserve the historical and cultural sites/artifacts. In terms of their social and emotional development, the participating students have developed friendship relations, group work competencies and empathy skills.

Introduction

New trends in education are changing the content of the concept of teaching and learning methods. What is expected from the contemporary educational approaches is to teach knowledge derived from the local community to the students and to encourage them to use it in their daily lives, instead of teaching isolated and unrelated information (Akca & Ata, 2009). Students' active participation in the learning processes, collaborative learning and problem solving methods are the most discussed issues in contemporary educational debates (Harmin & Toth, 2006; Nagel, 2008; Un-Acıkgoz, 2014). Personal experiences are important in a learning process where students are active. This means that education and training activities go out-of-school and become integrated with real life. The purpose of out-of-school education is to help students' personal developments in accordance with their interests, age, wishes and needs as set in the related attainment targets placed in the curriculum (Simsek & Kaymakci, 2015). The school has lost the priority of being the only place of learning (Onder, Abaci & Kamaraj, 2009).

In this research, museum and historical places have been determined as the contexts of practice for out-of-school education for social studies lessons. The definition of a museum that was revised in 2007 by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and still maintains its validity is as follows: "A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment." (ICOM, 2007). Museums and historic sites contribute to learners' socialization processes. Besides, informing the individuals about culture by displaying and interpreting concrete examples of the culture they belong to, it also provides them the necessary opportunities to improve their sense of culture and cultural belongings (Hein, 1998). Besides, being a venue to have a pleasant time, museums and historical sites, play an important role in the development of historical consciousness by informing students about the exhibited works (Abaci, 2005). In the study conducted by Dilek (2007), it is observed that while the students had problems in grasping political history issues; they were more

interested in local and cultural history. Children are bored to study places and abstract subjects that do not interest them by reading the textbooks in the class (Simsek, 2003). One of the most important problems experienced in history lessons is that students' thinking that the content they learn in history classes would not have any use in their real lives. In the recent years, the renewed curricula designed in accordance with the constructivist approach featured the importance of using primary resources and objects as well as active learning techniques, which have increased the importance of museums and historic places in educational contexts (Hein, 1998; Hooper-Greenhill, 1999). Museums and historical places can present various and different primary sources about culture and civilizations to the use of learners which social studies and history textbooks cannot offer. In addition to this, the interest and curiosity that might have been generated in the museums and historic places can also be brought back into the classroom environment. So, later learning can also be motivated. The museums and historical places; allow the students to gather information from primary sources and can provide opportunities to analyze and interpret objects. Students' skills of observation, organization, reasoning, deduction, classification and prediction might be developed, if museums and historical sites are utilized effectively (Ata, 2002).

Museum and historical place-based learning occurs through a physical immersion into carefully designed experiences in which objects are discovered and physical bonding is provoked. Students will touch objects, explore homes and gardens, climb stairs, and will do such things freely, if the type and design of the museum or historical place allows doing so. During this transformation, they use their feelings and bodies as a tool and a source of learning. For this reason, it can be said that verbal processes such as reading, listening and speaking are not sufficient for real learning, and that the processes of feeling have to work through physical action (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007). Students' personal conceptions of the objects and artifacts they come across in museum and historic site visits provide them with the opportunity to construct their own historical conceptions and understandings according to their own thinking structures. This helps children to compare the past and the present by developing historical empathy skills. Historical objects have significant potential as they provide with the opportunity to allow students to draw their own stories about the past by developing empathy, to make it possible to draw students' attention in a short period of time, to abstract historical concreteness, to activate curiosity, creativity and critical thinking (Culha-Ozbas, 2015).

Today, students and teachers have become the most important target groups of the museums. In some developed countries, bureaucratic obstacles have been removed and relations between schools and museums have systematically been established. As a result of these improvements, museums have started to give more importance to educational activities for schools and to design their exhibitions and activities to meet the requirements of the school curricula (Tezcan-Akmehmet, 2014). In Turkey on the other hand, it has been observed for many decades that museums have not been fulfilling their educational functions thoroughly. Although, museums in Turkey are assigned with the aim of improving the protection of cultural heritage, the approach that these places are seen as the home of the muse and are accepted as where innovative ideas develop, has not become widespread (Ata, 2009). Compared with the total number of the state museums in Turkey, the number of museums which employ museum educators and providing educational services for children, adults and schools are very limited (Onur, 2012; Tezcan-Akmehmet, 2008). As a natural consequence of this, state museums in Turkey are perceived as buildings built in their own shells and with cold walls away from the society. Museums in Turkey in general are not designed to be used for educational purposes. So, school-museum cooperation cannot be performed in a reasonable level. School-museum and school-historical site relations are usually practiced in the form of a collective school or class trip. On these trips, students often look at the objects behind the display windows quietly in a single row, and there is no interaction between students and historical objects. Naturally, it cannot be said that such a museum tour has developed active participation and creativity with the child. Learning activities in museums and historical places don't often go beyond the explanatory information of the museum guide or teacher in front of an object. Students who passively listen to this explanatory information are bored with time, and as a result no permanent learning can be observed.

In contemporary museum education, object-centered education method, in which children participate actively, is used. The goal of object-oriented education is to enable students to learn, using their sensory organs, the objects, their connection with the other objects, and issues and concepts related to the objects in the museum, by using the power of objects which are the primary sources of human accumulation (Tezcan-Akmehmet, 2005). It is evident that museums which have such a significant potential in education are not being actively made use of. In order for the education, which should be the main task of the museums, to be effective, it is necessary to prepare and put into action the activities for the students. In order for the prepared activities to be carried out effectively, it is necessary to educate teachers who can improve themselves and can implement by taking training in this field (Şar & Sağkol, 2013).

It has been revealed in the relevant studies that teachers in the Turkish context do not know much about the object-based activities in museums and historical places (Aktekin, 2008; Ari, 2010; Ata, 2002; Avci-Akcali, 2015; Avci & Öner, 2015; Demir, 2015; De Witt & Storksdieck, 2008; Kisa, 2012; Oner, 2015). In order to transform museums and historic sites into educational milieus for the students in the context of the social studies education, the need for designing and applying museum education activities has emerged in recent decades.

Aim of the Research

The aim of this research is to assess the usability and effectiveness of social studies teaching activities carried out before, in and after museum and historical place visits. In order to materialize the above aim, it was proposed to prepare a museum education module and to practice its content, including pre-visit, in museum or historic site and post visit dimensions in the context of social studies education. The other goals are to solve the problems that have occurred in the implementation processes, to improve those activities, and to strengthen museum-school relations. To materialize the above aims, the current study proposes to answer the following research question:

"What are the experiences, viewpoints and suggestions of grade seven middle school students on the educational activities carried out in museums and historical places?"

Method

This study employs a qualitative action research model. Action research is the process of studying the actual classroom or school environments or cases to understand and improve the nature of teaching and actions (Johnson, 2014). In order to enable the researchers oversee and control progresses of developing and implementing activities for museums and historical places, to monitor impediments and problems may arise, and to intervene process to solve problems that may occur, action research model was chosen. The development of an action plan for solving a problem that exists in the middle school in which the first author has worked is another influential factor in the selection of the action research (teacher research) model, as it is the most appropriate research design for the structure of the current study.

Action Research Process

In the first stage, researchers noticed that the museums and historic places were not used effectively in social studies education and there are only a few examples proposing effective use of museums and historic places in the relevant literature in Turkish context. Therefore, they specified the need for conducting a study on this topic.

In the second stage, the researchers focused on the definition of the museums and historical sites to be included in the study. The criteria used in this process are the possibility to carry out activities related to social studies teaching, the venue's appropriateness to the content of the grade seven social studies curriculum and students' personal and academic development, and its proximity to the school and convenience to reach. This process ended with the definition and selection of four museums and five historic sites as the venues of study visits included in the scope of the research.

In the third stage, a total of 34 activities were developed to use in pre-visit stage at school, during the visits and after the visits. Attention has been paid to ensure that the activities correspond to the cognitive and emotional developments of the students. While developing the activities, the researchers have taken into consideration the relevant studies which include activities and applications related to the museums and/or historical places (Akca-Berk, 2012; Avci-Akcali, 2013; Cerkez, 2011; Culha, 2006; Filiz, 2010; Yorulmaz, 2016). In order to assess the appropriateness of the activities and their validity, three social studies educators and a history educator were invited to examine the prepared activities in respect of their clarity and comprehensibility, their suitability to the subject area and to the level of the 7th grade students in terms of their linguistic and conceptual development. Some amendments were done in accordance with experts' views and suggestions. Then, the suitability of the activities' content and conceptual framework were tested through using some of the concepts and content in the classes preceding the application of this action research. Besides, other social studies teachers working in the school were also asked for their opinions on the activities. After then, the necessary amendments were done.

Educational activities were carried out in between the second half of March and the first half of May 2017. Researchers informed the participating students and their parents about the research and the processes and procedures it includes beforehand. Pre-visit activities were held at the school in order to raise students' awareness of the historical and cultural values of Manisa and its surroundings, as well as getting them acquainted with the topic before the activities in museums and historical places. The process continued in this way and the appropriate activities were carried out in the museums and the historical places. After the museum and historical site visits, post-visit activities were conducted in the school. The data collection process was carried out at every stage of the application process. In order to make a general evaluation of the research, focus groups meetings were held with the previously formed groups. By this way, students are provided with the opportunity to express what they have learned, felt, thought and so on throughout the research process.

Study Group

A class, comprising of 36 students (20 female, 16 male) in a secondary school in Manisa (located in the west of Turkey), where the first author worked as a social studies teacher, formed the study group. The socio-economic levels of students were not deliberately taken into account when the study group was identified. The basic logic of the research is to prepare usable and effective activities for schools that cannot regularly organize visits to museums and historical places either located in distant places or in the nearby areas, because of their financial shortcomings. During the course of the study, attention has been paid to prevent the students in the study group experience any financial difficulties.

Data Collection

Since the learning process in the museums and historical places are experience based and targeting the learners' emotional development, qualitative data collection tools were used, because they have been seen to be compatible for the holistic structure of the research. Qualitative data collection process has been applied through; observations (researcher field notes, research journal, video recordings), interviews (focus group interviews, individual interviews) and written records (student diaries, student portfolios, applied activities).

After the processes of implementation, focus group interviews were conducted with the students. Through semi-structured interview forms, the views, perceptions and awareness of the students at the end of the process were investigated. While semi-structured interview forms were being prepared, three field experts were consulted. During the research processes, the first author observed the students and took notes. Some parts of the processes were also video recorded. In addition, after each activity, students kept a diary, recording what they have learned, their emotions and thoughts and what they felt in that day. Students were guided and instructed on the topics they should mention in their diaries.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was applied to the data obtained from observations, interviews and written records. Content analysis is a qualitative data analysis method involving stages of retrieving, classifying and comparing findings to arrive at theoretical results (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). While content analysis is being done, constant comparative analysis techniques are utilized. The stages of the constant comparative analysis procedures followed in this study are shown in Figure 1.

The qualitative data is divided into meaningful fractions in the word processor and made it ready for the analysis. The data was read and compared several times and coded. Then, the codes were compared and contrasted with the data obtained from all three data sets (observations, interviews and written sources) to provide that they would best represent the relevant phenomenon as advised by Punch (2005). This comparative coding procedure led the researchers to arrive at some categories. While individual codes provide conceptualization for each dataset, categories represent the common aspects of each dataset and that form a meaningful whole in the same group. The first step of the abstraction process is accomplished by combining the similar and meaningful aspects of the various expressions, which seem to be different from each other but which are actually mirror images of the same process by means of categories in a single framework.

The categories play a central role in the process of the "progression" of raw data into the abstraction phase. In the abstraction phase, the categories were compared and the ones with similar characteristics and similar meanings were collected in the same theme. In accordance with constant comparative method, the findings obtained from qualitative data presented in the form of figures and extracts taken from data sources were used to support those findings. For ethical purposes, instead of student real names, codes representing their gender (e.g. M1, M2, F1, F2) were used.

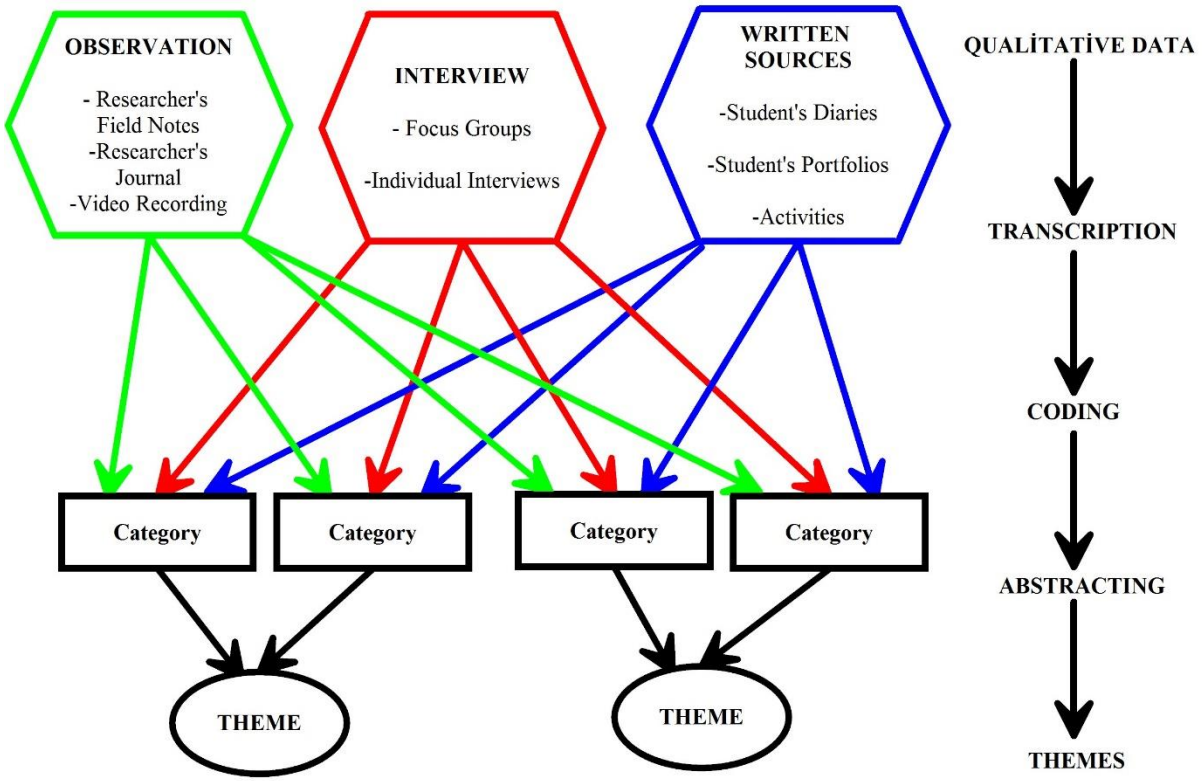


Figure 1. The phases of constant comparative analysis

Results

Affective and Cognitive Satisfaction

In order to show how and in what ways their participation in the educational activities contributed to the students in terms of affective and cognitive aspects, in the focus group interviews the students were invited to talk about their feelings and thoughts related to studying in museums and historical places. In Figure 2, the perceptions of the learners in terms of their affective satisfaction are displayed, while Figure 3 presents the cognitive aspects of students' academic developments.

As can be seen in Figure 2, their involvement in the current study has influenced students' emotions positively. The participating students mostly declared that they were happy and being entertained. One of them expressed his feelings as follows:

> *"Today I went to the museum for the first time in Manisa. I was really excited. I heard about the Manisa Museum, but the excitement grew steadily as I had never gone there before. I was very happy. The school that I attend runs trips for the first time. This happiness continued until the end of the trip. I liked some things a lot. The games we played in the museum, the clay work, the items in the museum and the patterns, writings and engravings on them. I still cannot comprehend how people of those historical ages engraved these shapes, patterns and texts on the stones."(F3).*

As a result of the practices, it is seen that students' historical empathy skills have improved. Another student's opinion can be regarded as signs of historical empathy:

> *"I felt like people who had lived in the past. When I saw the items they made, I felt like I was living at that time and using them. I was very happy; I had fun and remembered the past."* (M1).

Student's showing curiosity about the conditions of life in the past and imagining about it while visiting the museums and historic places can be interpreted as having a positive influences on students' affectional development. As the level of awareness of the historical and cultural characteristics of the city in which the students live has increased, their interest on history has aroused and they have begun to care more about historical issues. In addition, by confronting the material evidence of the cultural aspects of the past, the students were led to feel pride of their ancestors and to increase their historical knowledge. A female student's opinion expresses this as:

> *"In the room, there were important writings, calligraphy, precious handbags, swords and a whole lot more. In the back garden there was a section composed of graves and tombstones. They have even engraved them. It is a perfect thing to be a descendant of such a generation. I am very happy to come to this museum."* (F11).

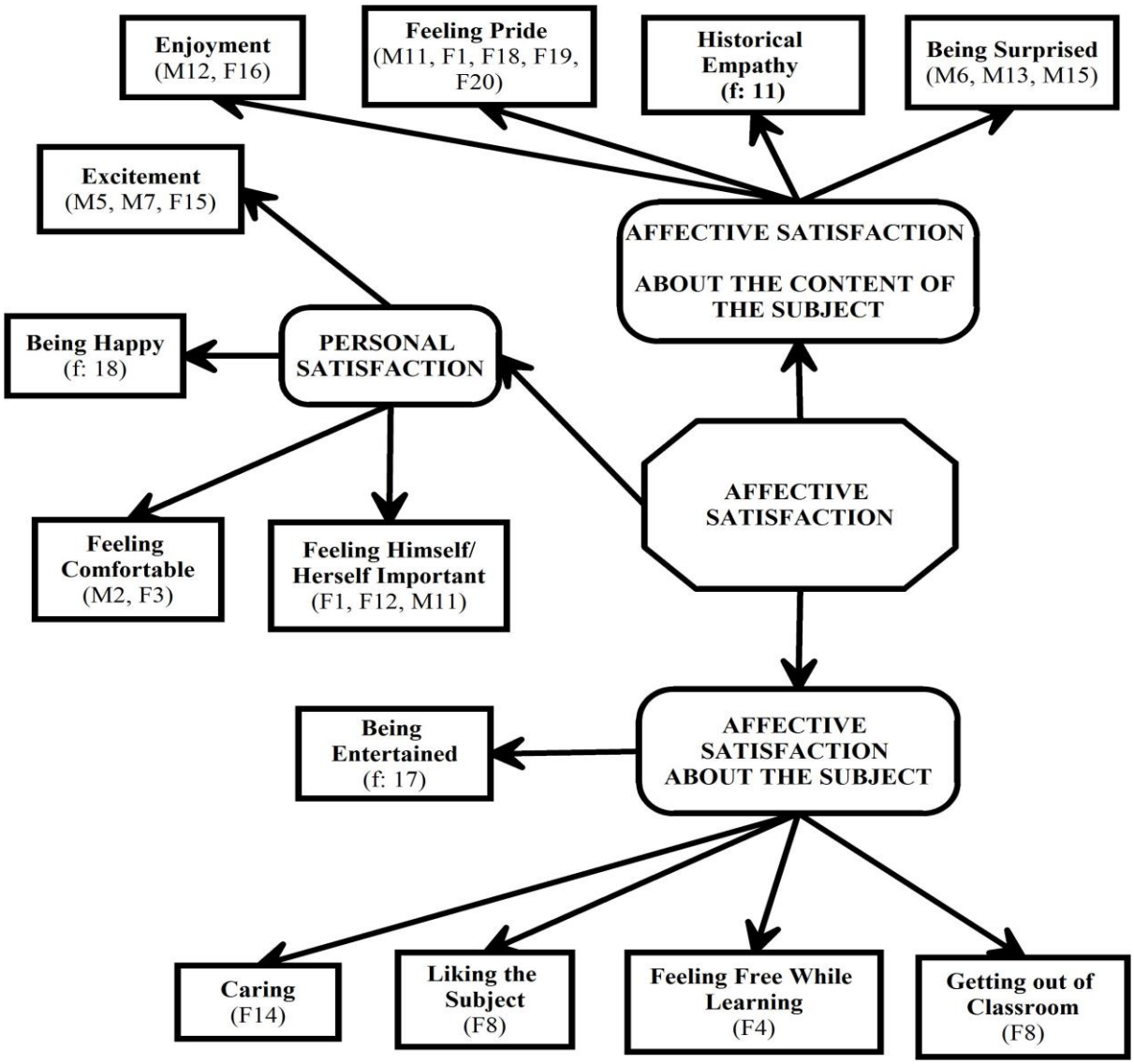


Figure 2. The contribution of studying in museums and historical places on students' affective development

From the above citation, it can be said that as the students' awareness increases, their perspective of history also changes positively. The following opinion exemplifies this change:

> "*Before, I did not care too much, saying that it is just a work but by seeing and touching, it became memorable and I began to care about it more."* (F6).

Students who were not accustomed to this kind of experience before, and were accustomed to the classic museum tours (look-see-pass by), initially expressed anxiety, amazement and excitement. The following extract explains this situation better:

> "*I was excited first. This was the first time we have done something like this. I was afraid that something will happen to the historical artefacts, or that it will break or get damaged. Then, I got really happy as I got used to it."* (F14).

The researchers observed that the students were confused in this first visit. Although they had provided the necessary information to the students in the school before the visit, they observed that they were not willing to follow the rules and that they were refrain from communicating with the museum staff. Towards the end of the first visit, it was observed that by means of the increasing positive interaction between the museum staff and themselves, the students got rid of their confusion and hesitations and started to act more comfortably. This is expressed in the researcher's journal:

> "*The students were very happy to go out of school and travel only with their own classmates. I was naturally excited and nervous. Although, two students said that they would come, they did not come. Missing two students from the first day annoyed me. When we entered the museum, my students were moving in a timid and scattered manner. As a first job, I roughly visited the museum with my students. Then we started our activities. Not leaving from the museum instantly and beginning to do our activities, immensely attracted the attention of the museum staff. Especially, in clay dough and painting activities, students work together. The museum staff mentioned that they had not seen similar events previously. They started to take pictures. The museum director said they would share them on the social media. We worked in the museum until 5 pm and closed the museum together with its staff. Museum staff was very confused …"* (Researcher Journal).

Getting the activities done with their own class only, made the students feel special and valued. As a result of this, they have stated that they liked social studies classes more as one girl puts it:

> *"I thought that social studies was a more enjoyable subject. I thought it would be more comprehendible by visiting and seeing. I did not like history this much in the first term, as it was not memorable and was more difficult. Now I have started to love social studies more and I thought how valuable the time I spent at the museum is."* (F20).

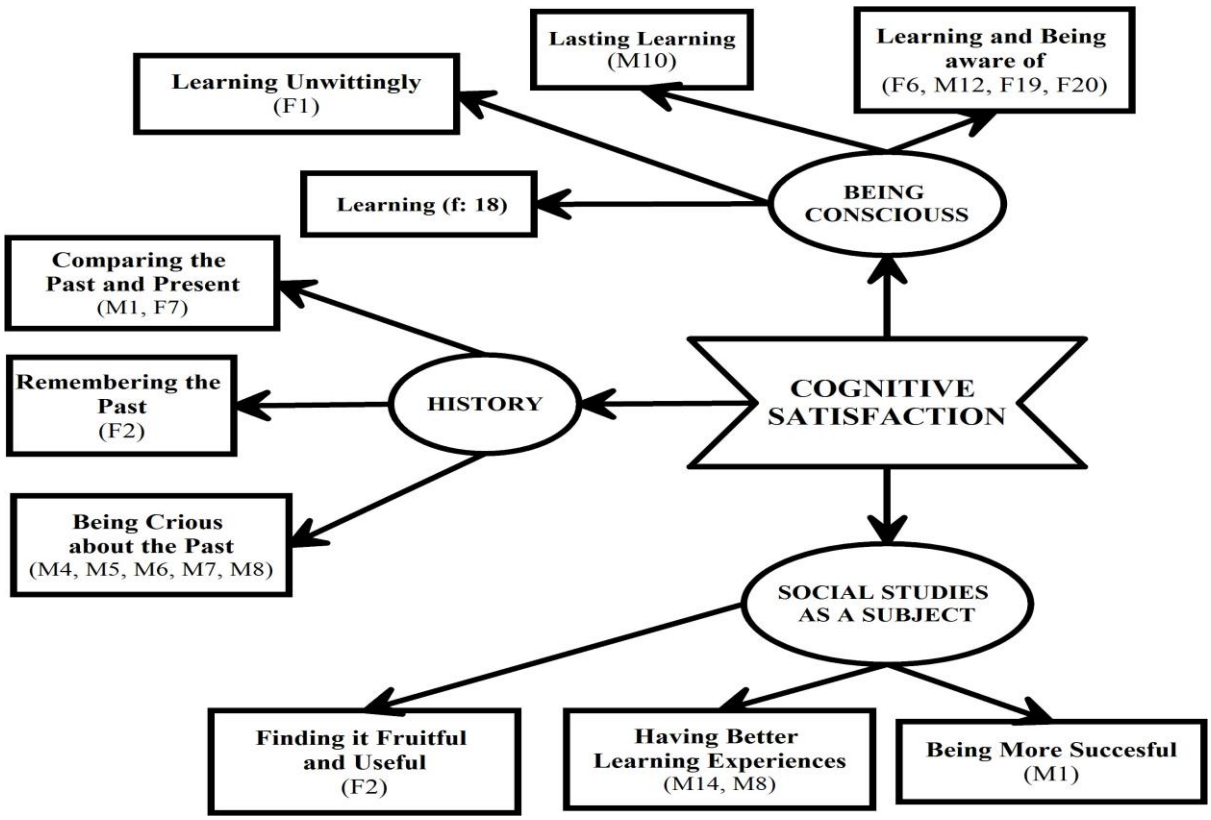


Figure 3. The contribution of studying in museums and historical places on students' cognitive development

The above statement shows that museum learning provides important affectional benefits and that the student understands the value of the time spent in visits.

As can be seen in Figure 3, the activities and practices seem to influence students' cognitive development positively. The students have put more emphasis on the learning category. Besides, they declare that they have realized things about the locality that they did not know before as the extract below highlights:

> *"I think it is something very informative; because normally such things are not written in the textbooks, no matter how much you watch or search, you won't find such things. It is more memorable and informative because we learn through seeing it with our own eyes and being able to touch them."* (F14).

In the category of curiosity towards the past, students were curious about how and under what conditions these places were built. Their curiosity was also obvious in their assignment products. They produced similar things that they visited in historical places and museums. The following citation describes this situation better:

> *"I thought how the buildings and the mosques were built. I thought the structure of the Kula houses. I thought about the relations among the neighbors at that time."* (E5).

In the above citation, students thinking about the production processes of those historical structures and works and making various inferences about them contributed to the development of their historical empathy skills. Studies conducted with undergraduate students by Altun (2016) and with high school students by Akca-Berk and Gultekin (2011); overlap to these results indicating that learners interested in daily life, social history and the lives of ordinary people in the past. Marino (2012) emphasizes that students' interest and curiosity about historical issues would increase by means of participating in local history studies. It was observed that the perspective of the students, who realize that the artistic and aesthetic advancement of historical objects which cannot be observed in with those ones designed and produced in today, changes in a positive way. This also allows students to make past-present comparisons:

> *"In the past people were more considerate. In the past, things possessing beauty and appeal attracted interests of people more. Nowadays, instead of things which appeal the eye, its usefulness was given importance. In the past, people used to value art more."* (F7).

It can be interpreted from the above extract that the students' perceptions of artistic and cultural accumulation of people lived in the past has changed positively. Another category in cognitive satisfaction is that the lesson is better thought and the students see themselves more successful as one student declares below:

> *"I found myself more successful while studying in historical places."* (F15).

As the activities proceeded, more students indicated that the lesson is more meaningful and lasting, and that they feel themselves more successful in this way.

Benefits of the Practices According to the Students

The benefits of teaching in museums and historical places according to the students' viewpoints are shown in Figure 4. Figure 4 presents students' viewpoints about the benefits of learning in museums and historic places in three categories; the discipline of history, the subject of social studies and personal satisfaction. In the discipline of history category, the participants stated that the activities were most beneficial when learning historical and cultural characteristics of Manisa and the historical places. As a result of the practices, they stated that they developed local awareness by learning the history, culture, historical places and museums of the city they live in. The following extract exemplifies this:

> *"In the past, I did not have much information about the place where I live. Now I will remember it not as a mosque but a monument and a place where I have memories. Previously, I did not know the places where Süleyman the Magnificent had built for his mother. I did not know the Külliyes (Social Complexes)."* (F8).

In the subject of social studies category, the students expressed that they learned easier and that they did not forget the information they learned while studying in museums and historical places. A male student put this as:

> *"It was very good. It had many benefits. We learned by going there. We did not study from our textbook. For example, we went to Sardes. It was a lasting learning experience for me. If we learned it by writing it in our notebook, we would have had to check it during the exam time and memorize it. But even though we have not studied for today's test, we have done it comfortably."* (M11).

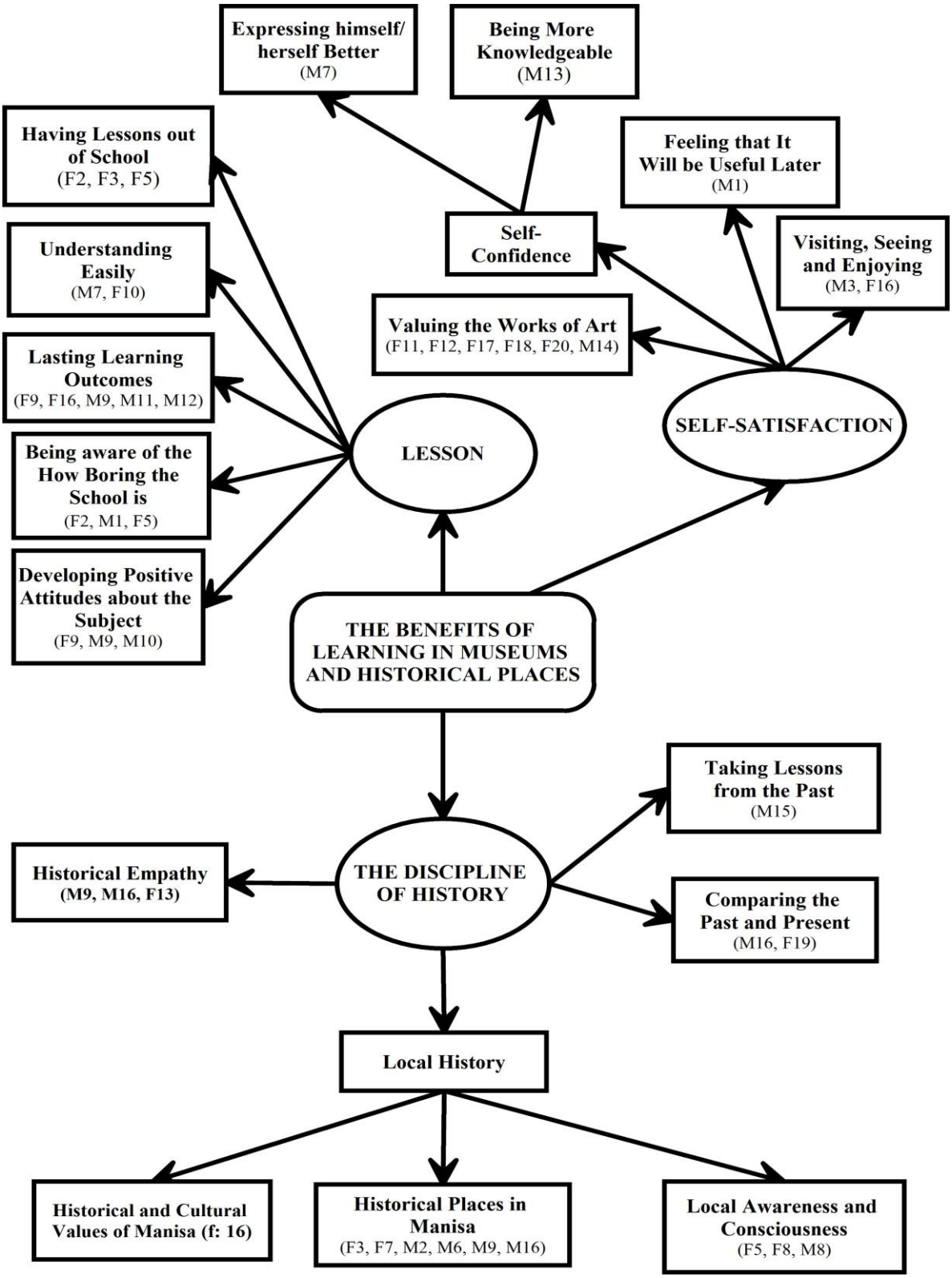


Figure 4. Benefits of studying in museums and historical places

Within the subject of social studies category, the positive attitude sub-category come to fore. Students expressed that activities and practices played important roles for them to develop positive attitudes towards social studies lessons. One participant indicates this viewpoint as:

> "*I used to think that social studies only includes history. I thought it was boring. The information I learned was not permanent; but now I can see that social studies is not just history, the lives of all people and the knowledge I learned are all in my mind." (*F9).

In the personal satisfaction category, students have emphasized that by means of the activities carried out they had the opportunity to see the places that they had not seen before, they had fun, felt relaxed and contend, gained self-confidence, had the opportunity to get to know the art works closely and that all the information that they have learned would be useful for themselves in the future. A female student's view given below better clarifies this perspective:

> *"It was fun to learn by seeing and touching outside the classroom. I used to think that social studies lesson was only include Turkish history. But I do not think like that anymore. We are now learning the value of arts and artefacts better."* (F12).

As can be understood from the above extract, the students were very pleased to be able to study and learn social studies lessons in the museums and historical places. It has been observed throughout the process by researchers that students are happy to study in museums and historical places. In addition to this all of the students stated that learning in museums and historical places is better and more beneficial than learning in class.

Difference between Learning in Museums and Historical Places and Learning in School

Students' viewpoints on the different aspects and positive features of learning in museums and historical places are shown in Figure 5.

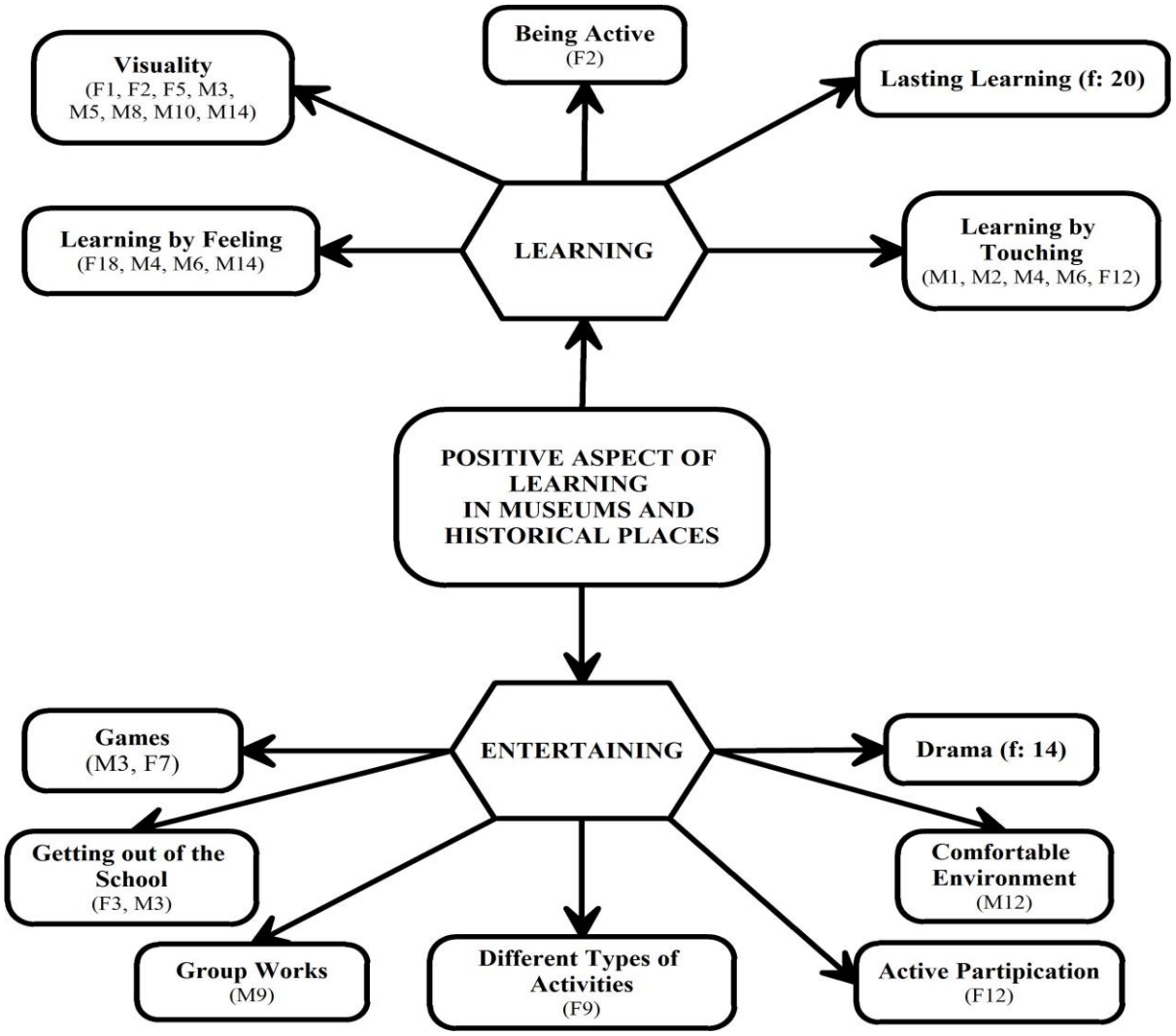


Figure 5. Positive aspects of museum and historical place learning for students

As shown in Figure 5, the reasons why students prefer to study in museums and historical sites are grouped into two main categories: learning and entertainment. According to this, the differences that distinguish museum learning from school learning are; to be able to touch, to have a chance to learn by feeling, to appeal to the audience and to actively participate. On student stated that:

> "*Learning in the museums is better, because we are learning while visiting, we are learning life at its own place and it is more beneficial. It is more memorable. If we learn in the classroom we forget within a month or two, it is not memorable. When it is in the museum we never forget and it is memorable."* (F3).

It is seen from the above extract that the students emphasize the importance of learning by doing. The expressions of the students are in accordance with the affective goals of learning in the museum and the historical place. Learning in museums and historical places are more permanent because it is based on experience and active participation.

The second main category is that students find learning in museums and historical places enjoyable and entertaining. Looking at the sub-categories, creative drama activities are often expressed. Enabling students' active participation, creative drama activities have entertained and enabled them to learn. Creative drama activities have been a different kind of experience for students who have never encountered such an experience beforehand. The extract below supports this:

> *"Drama is a very entertaining game. I remember this game most, because it made me very happy to revive that drama in front of everyone and to reduce my shyness to minimum. That's why I remember it. "* (F6 Student Diary).

Beforehand, going out of school and playing games in a relaxed atmosphere, group work and doing different kinds of activities were seen as things that not accessible for the participating students and very hard to do. The reason for this is that ordinarily students are required to stay in between four walls and to learn by mostly following a textbook, rather than learning by doing as one of them puts it:

> *"I am glad we came here and played such fun games. But of course our only aim in coming here is not to play fun games, to reinforce historical artefacts in the context of games, to make them permanent and not to forget the information learned here."* (F7 Student Diary).

With the practices, students have become more comfortable and free from the standard activities they have always done at school.

The Importance and Value of the Museum and Historical Place Activities

The data obtained through the focus group interviews carried out with the participants reveal the significance and value of the practices as shown in Figure 6. Students see museum and historical place activities important and valuable in terms of historical awareness, social life, the subject of social studies and cultural awareness categories. When the significance and value of the activities are examined in consideration with historical awareness, students expressed that they realized the historical and cultural characteristics of Manisa during the implementation process and that they did not have much information about the place they live beforehand. So, they got the required information about Manisa as a result of these practices. To better illustrate this situation, the following is cited:

> *"I think these visits are important. Three months ago, we did not know anything about Manisa's history, but we visited these places and got more information."* (F10).

The above quotation proves that students' knowledge and awareness level of their locality and its history have been increased. The use of this knowledge in their daily lives, which students gained within the course of the study, has changed their lifestyle in a positive way. The following interview extract reveals the change in attitudes and behaviors of students with regard to this issue:

> *"The visits are important because there was a stone there which I did not care before, but now I know why it is there and that's why I see it as more important."* (M6).

The students declared that they learn and appreciate the history better. Another student's view backs up this assertion as:

> *"I think these trips are important. If I did not join those trips, I would not go to those mosques and museums. I would say, I don't care. Thanks to the trips I went, I saw and I learned."* (M11).

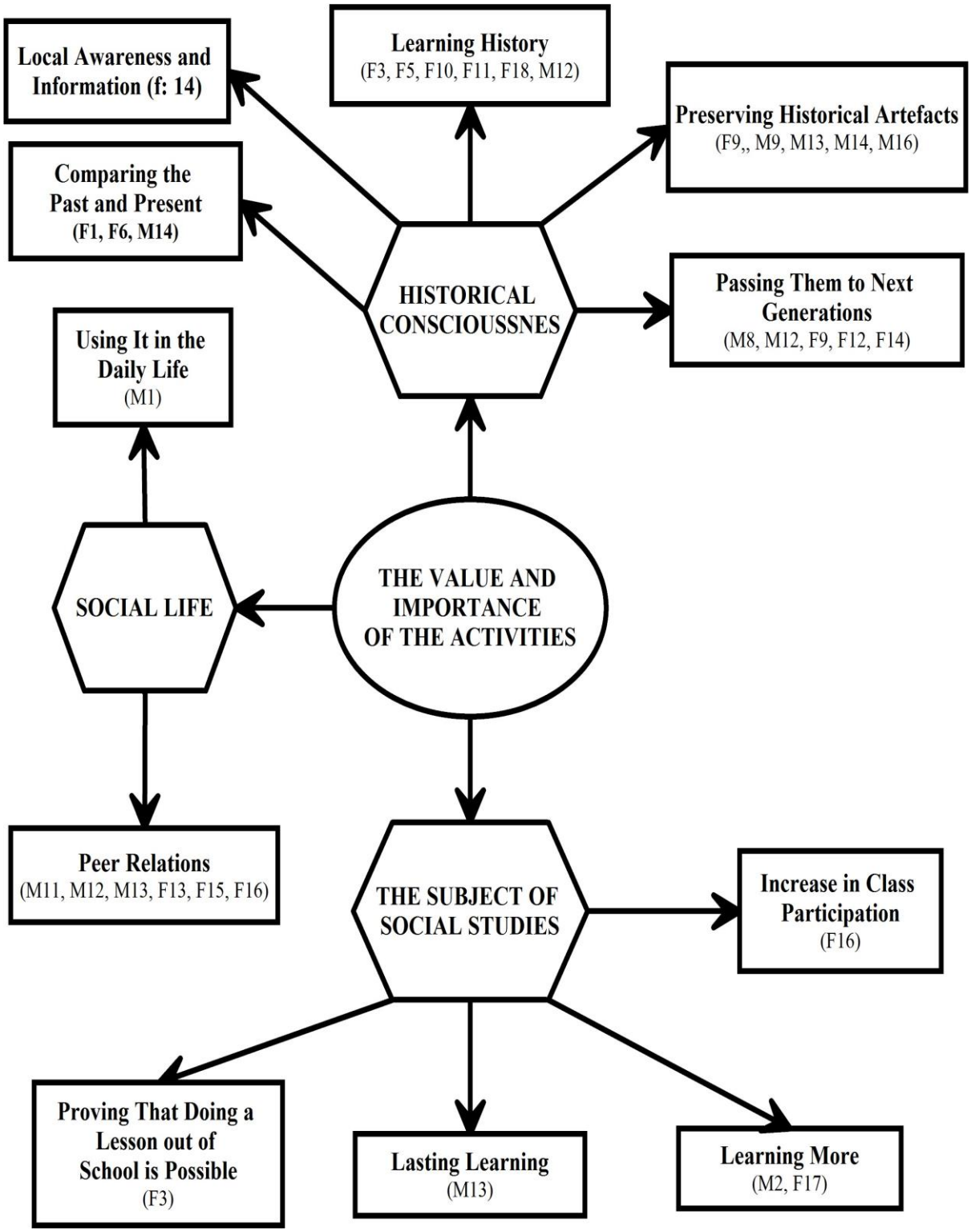


Figure 6. The importance and value of museum and historical place activities for students

Another important benefit of these practices is that students, who feel themselves as to be able to compare the past and the present, being aware of the historical and cultural values in their locality now intend to protect those places and to pass them on to the next generations. A female student's viewpoint puts forward this conclusion clearly:

> *"Visits are important because if people in Manisa know the importance of the city they live in, and if we continue to protect the artefacts here and pass it on to the future generations, we would keep the past alive. The activities proved that Manisa is an important city."* (F9).

As a general summary of the above explanations, the development of the students' consciousness of history as a result of the practices is shown together with its phases in Figure 7.

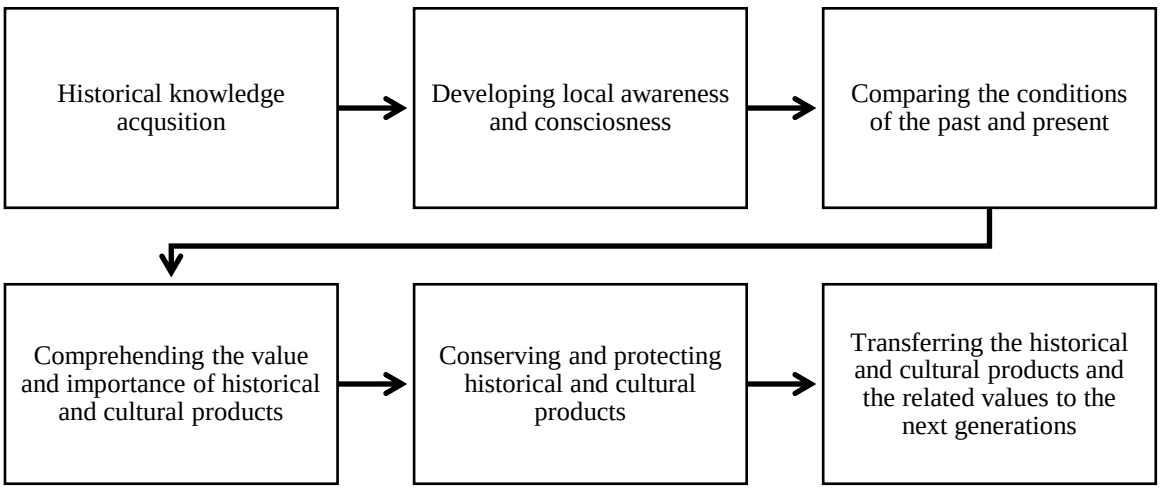


Figure 7. The stages of the development of students' historical consciousness

The examination of Figure 7 indicates that the students first learned about the historical and cultural characteristics of Manisa. The knowledge they have gained has increased the level of their local awareness, and students have gained the skills to compare the conditions of the past and present. By recognizing the importance and value of the historical and cultural buildings, monuments and artefacts, the students who have acquired these skills have developed the sensitivity to protect and transfer them to future generations.

The activities also influenced students' social skills. Students declared that they have been more socialized and have built closer relations with each other. A direct quotation given below to illustrate this:

> "*It was beautiful. For example ..... I have never been to our friend's house before. We prepared projects together. I never talked before. I have opened up more here."* (F5).

It is seen from the above extract that the students' peer relations with each other have developed in positive way within the processes of the study. Another subcategory within the social life category expresses the participants' view that they can use what they have learnt from the visits in their everyday life. The quotation below supports this is assertion:

> *"We should learn our history; we need it in our daily lives. We would live with any purpose. Something happened after these trips. I was embarrassed to join the class, and I got used to you a little. Before, I was shy and said nothing to anyone. I was only talking to my friend .... After the trips we are talking about the trips and about the course. We are acting as if we have been friends for a long time."* (F11).

Being involved in the activities positively influenced students' perspectives on social studies. Students stated that they learn more, that they are actively involved in the class, their learning is more permanent, and they feel being able to study outside the school without confronting any problem.

The Problems Encountered and Suggestions to Solve

Figure 8 below, displays the issues that the students had problems or difficulties while participating in the visits and activities. Figure 9 presents the students' suggestions to solve those problems or difficulties.

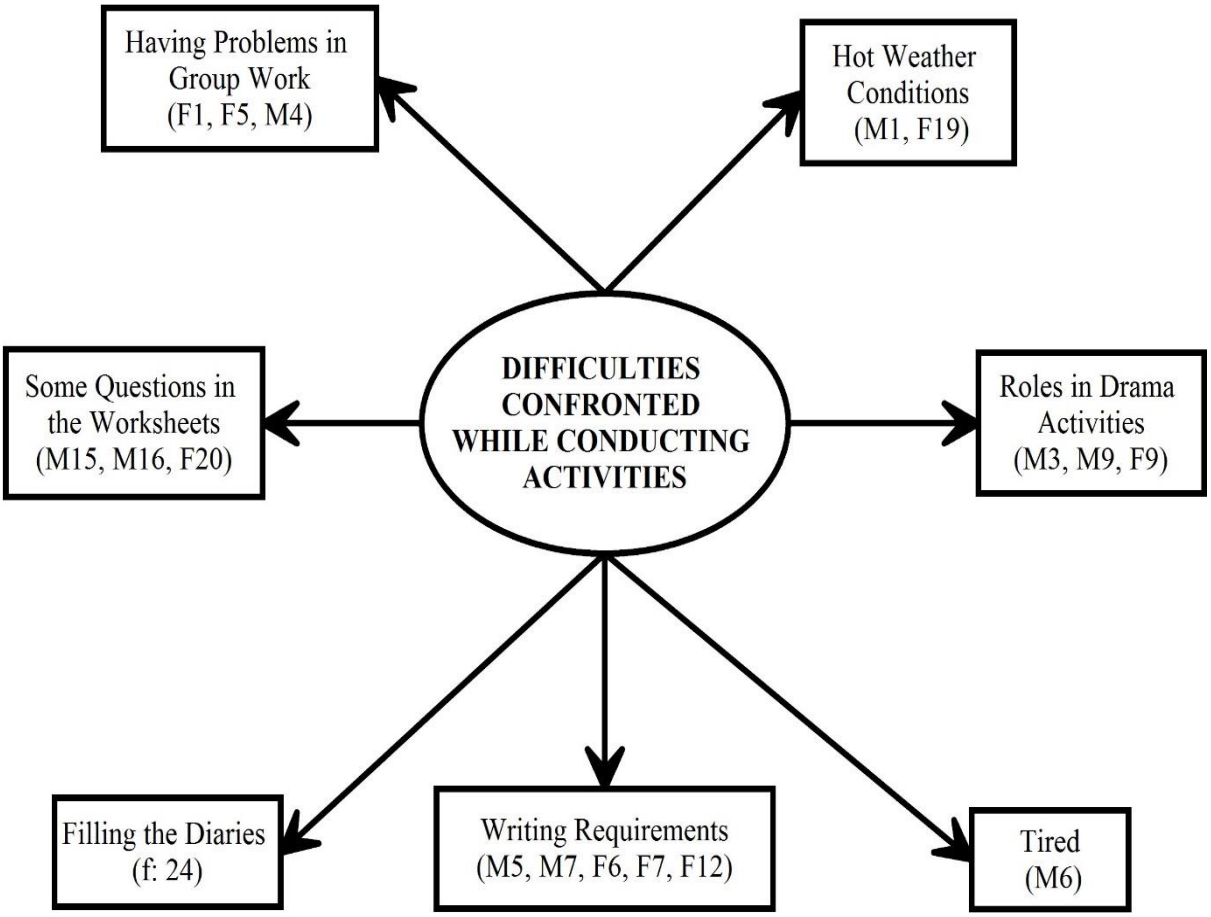


Figure 8. The problems encountered by students within the course of study

Figure 8 displays that most of the students experienced difficulties while working on the worksheets, which were the main tasks of the many activities carried out. The main reason behind this was found out to be as students not being accustomed to write too much in or out of classroom. As some of them asserted that they also had difficulty in keeping their dairies, because nothing comes up to their minds while writing on their diaries. Another difficulty experienced was the group adaptation problem during the group works. The researcher was careful to randomly distribute the students while determining the groups to better integrate with each other, and to ensure that those ones, who were close friends beforehand, might not deliberately end up in the same group. In this case, some students mentioned that there were some disagreements in their groups at the beginning, but after a certain period they sorted it out by talking among themselves. Another problem that has been encountered was related to the distribution of roles within the group in creative drama activities. Here, a female student explains this issue:

> *"We could not agree on the roles with my group friends in creative drama activities. I had to accept the role I did not want."* (F5).

Some of the students stated that they had difficulty in answering certain questions in the worksheets. Getting help from group members and the researcher, they quickly sorted out this problem as one of them points out:

> *"The most challenging place for me was Kula; to explain why the streets of Kula are so narrow; because it is very irrational to make the streets narrow. I thought why someone would make the streets so narrow. I thought no one will make the streets narrow. I learned that the reason for the narrow streets was that it was in castle settlement. It never came to my mind before. That's why I had difficulty here."* (F11).

Students' suggestions displayed on Figure 9 features that they enjoyed creative drama activities a lot. They stated that it would be more useful to perform creative drama within all activities and in all venues. Expectedly, students who were not willing to write more suggested more creative drama activities instead of writing sections. The participants who want to have more game-based events have indicated that they have fun with games. The participants also suggested that the time span allocated for activities must be increased; the activities should include more games; the teacher might give them preparatory homework before the visits and some other ideas displayed in Figure 9.

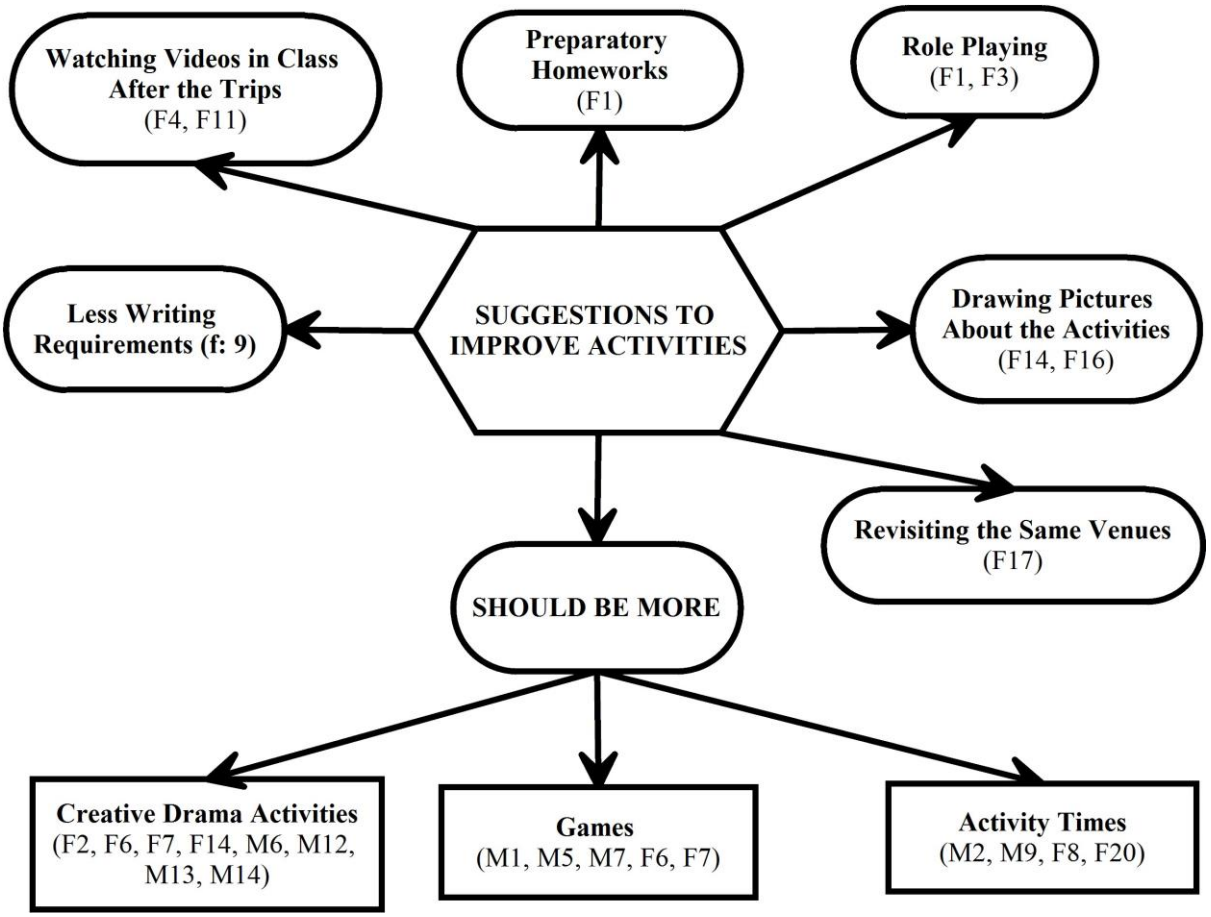


Figure 9. Students' suggestions for improving the quality of the activities

Discussion and Conclusion

The overall aim of this research is to assess the usability and effectiveness of social studies teaching activities carried out in museums and historical places in consideration with the experiences, viewpoints and suggestions of the participating grade seven middle school students. The examination of the available data concludes that the museum and historical place activities have enabled the students to experience affective satisfaction. The students expressed that their participation in the processes made them enjoy the learning contexts, love social studies lessons more, feel free and comfortable, to be proud of their history and feel themselves valued. This outcome is compatible with similar studies done by Aktekin (2009), Avci-Akcali (2013), Csikszentmihalyi and Hermanson (1995), Cerkez (2011), Culha (2006), Demirboga (2010), Filiz (2010), Guler (2011), Isik (2008), Kusan (2005), Meredith, Fortner and Mullins (1997), Nisanci (2010), Rix and McSorley (1999), Tuffy (2011), Tunc-Sahin (2011), Yazicioglu (2010), Wellington (1990), Yorulmaz (2016) and Zayimoglu-Ozturk (2014). It is observed that museum and historical place learning is very different from ordinary school learning in terms of affective domain. Based on the senses and experience, museums and historical place learning are far from being unilaterally conveying isolated and abstract knowledge to the students, it provides the possibility for close observation and touching objects, for aesthetic sensitivity and for critical thinking and imagination (Ambrose & Paine, 2006). It is quite natural for students to be happy and pleased on the school trips as they get into a new and different atmosphere. What is important here is whether the affective satisfaction of the students is due to going out of the school or is it really due to the activities they were participated in. It is quite clear that, as it has been explained in detail in the results, the participants' affective satisfaction is a direct outcome of the activities.

The museum and historical place activities have enabled the students to experience cognitive satisfaction too. The students declared that they have learned about topics they did not know before. They can compare the past with the present, feeling more curious about the past, viewing the lessons as more productive and seeing that they can be more successful. The results of the research are consistent with similar studies in the literature in terms of cognitive domain (Anderson, 1999; Avci-Akcali, 2013; Bamberger & Tal, 2006; Cerkez, 2011; Culha, 2006; Demirboga, 2010; DeWitt & Storksdieck, 2008; Filiz, 2010; Guler, 2011; Kusan, 2005; Miglietta,

Belmonte & Boero, 2008; Pope, 2009; Yazicioglu, 2010; Yesilbursa, 2006; Yorulmaz, 2016). Because museum and historical place learning provides students active learning experiences, through which they have taken responsibility personally and making decisions with their free-will, the participants have expressed much about the fact that they had lasting learning outcomes.

The participants benefited from the activities carried out in the research in various ways. The students stated that after conducting those activities, they feel themselves confident to compare the past with the present, to evaluate and learn to take lessons from the past events, to develop historical empathy skills, to appreciate the historical and cultural values of Manisa. Besides, they felt that their awareness about the place they live and their historical consciousness have been improved as a result of getting to know the museums and historical places in Manisa more closely. Being related to history and history education, these results are compatible with the findings of Culha's study (2006), carried out in Izmir with 7th grade students. Another study carried out in the same region found out that through participating in local history activities, high school students had developed positive attitudes towards the city they live in and their knowledge about the locality and awareness levels have increased (Avci-Akcali, 2013). In the light of these results, it can easily be said that a positive change has been provided with the students in the dimension of local history of Manisa. DeWitt and Storksdieck (2008) pointed out that field trips have played an important role in helping students develop local awareness and consciousness.

The current study contributed students' learning of social studies in several ways. Students expressed that through their involvement in the activities they understood the lesson more easily and had lasting learning outcomes. Besides, by means of having lessons in different venues other than school environment made them develop positive attitudes towards social studies. The study also had some positive impacts on the participants' personality development. With their participation in the research processes, the students felt that their self-esteem increased and that as a result they could feel more knowledgeable and to be able to express themselves more easily. When people are involved in learning environments; participating in meaningful activities that do now force them to get involved in adverse mental processes; having the opportunity to choose and to control their own learning; and facing with challenging activities they are more motivated to engage in with learning processes. Since this learning process rewards the person in an inner sense, the individual finds his learning activity satisfying and enjoys the activity she/he has done (Falk & Dierking, 2002, Filiz, 2010). The students have declared that they have enjoyed visiting museums and historical places, seeing various artefacts and etc. and feeling themselves as persons who value the works of art more.

Another result of the research is that museum and historical place learning has different aspects from the school learning. Unlike their school learning, students learn by seeing, touching, feeling and doing in museums and historical places. As a result of this, they have arrived at a position indicating that they had permanent learning experiences and outcomes. These results are compatible with several studies in the relevant literature (Anderson, Kisiel & Storksdieck, 2006; Storksdieck, Robbins & Kreisman, 2007; Storksdieck, Werner & Kaul, 2006). Additionally, museum and historical place learning processes do not only supports school learning but also it improves students' development in every aspect and prepares them for the future as asserted by some researchers (De Witt & Storksdieck, 2008; Hofstein & Rosenfeld, 1996; Orion & Hofstein, 1994; Storksdieck, 2006). Another difference from school learning is that museum and historical place learning is fun and that students are emotionally motivated. The teacher's approach to students within the course of study enabled the participants to feel themselves in a comfortable environment, to conduct group work freely and willingly, and to feel themselves free of examination and grade anxiety. The point that needs to be further evaluated here is creative drama activities. Students were substantially influenced by creative drama activities. Students who have been accustomed to the multiple choice exams, which do not measure their abilities of analyzing and interpreting the data from various kinds of sources, and who are not very successful at expressing themselves have been involved in such an activity for the first time. Through creative drama activities, students had the opportunity to learn history by feeling and experiencing and to analyze and interpret various historical sources that assisted them in developing their historical thinking skills.

As a course of its nature, museum learning is different from school learning, as it is based on the use of real objects, allowing the freedom of choice, and not being limited to the course of formal education (Ambrose & Paine, 2006; Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Oruc & Altin, 2008). Contrary to formal education guided by externally set standards, there is not any standardized program or curriculum for museums and historical places. Most museums are dedicated to a specific subject and there is no formal evaluation system. The museum learning is more open-ended, more personal-oriented, more unpredictable and more flexible than formal learning situations (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007). As a result of this, it has been required that a different method should be used from similar research employing experimental design (Avci-Akcali, 2013; Cerkez, 2011; Epik, 2004; Yazicioglu, 2010; Yesilbursa, 2006). In accordance with the nature of museum education, the performances of students in

terms of their lives, experiences, feelings and activities were considered important in this study. It was accepted from the beginning of the research that the attitudes of the students on social studies as a school subject would be increased because they would feel themselves free from in between of four walls.

The activities conducted within the course of the study enabled students to learn more about Manisa's local history, to develop local awareness and consciousness, to be able to compare the past and the present, to comprehend the importance and value of historical and cultural values, to develop the sensitivity about appreciating, protecting and preserving historical and cultural products, and to have the desire to transfer these to the next generations. The behavioral patterns listed above demonstrate that as a result of the practices, the students gained historical consciousness. The processes they involved in also contributed the students' social development. Students have developed friendship relations, group work competencies, respecting others and empathy skills. As a result of this situation, students' self-esteem has increased. The study conducted by Filiz (2010), found out that museum practices developed students' ability to work with groups, enabled them to learn collaboratively and to be respectful to one another. Their participation in the activities also had impact on students' level of getting involved in the social studies lessons in the classroom, feeling that they are learning more, having meaningful learning experiences, and learning how to study outside of the school. Similar to these results, most of the students in the survey conducted with high school students by Aktekin (2009) stated that if history lessons are taught in relation to the city they live in, they would better understand and the lessons would be more enjoyable. This was also concluded in the studies conducted by Avci-Akcali (2013), Culha (2006), Isik (2008) and Tunc-Sahin (2011). It was also found out in Altun's (2016) and Akça-Berk and Gultekin' (2011) studies that, students are curious about the locality they live in, daily life and ordinary people's lives, and that they are more likely to enjoy the lesson based on these topics.

Filling their dairies was the most challenging task for the students within the course of this study. This can be explained by the fact that ordinarily students are not used to write a lot in some subjects, including social studies. Some students faced difficulties while participating in group works, performing drama and animation roles, and answering to questions placed in worksheets. In order to make the visits and activities more useful, students suggested to increase the number of creative drama and animation activities, to reduce the amounts of writings, to increase the duration of games and activities, and to have more than one visit to some venues. All of these suggestions were taken into consideration, while revising the activity plans.

Recommendations

It has been seen that museum education in Turkey has not been considered important and school museum visits have still been carried out in the form of look-see and pass by. In order to avoid this, the teachers need to know what kind of activities they can conduct in the museums. Teachers should be given institutional training for museum education. Institutional training should not be considered as collecting teachers in a conference hall and forcing them to read the literal knowledge-information. Workshops should be held where the teachers will prepare their own activities. These workshops must be held in every province or region. Firstly, museums and historical places of the province or the region will be identified and then activities related to these places should be prepared. The resulting events must be made available to all teachers through a website. This system has been practiced in the United States for many years under the name of "Teaching with Historic Places" and teachers are uploading their own activities on the system for their colleagues to use.

It is obvious that there are some difficulties in teaching in museums and historical places. There have been occasions where researchers have encountered various difficulties while carrying out the activities. First of all, the teacher should be the one who is willing to organize the trip. According to Hopkinson (2001, cited in Acikalin, 2017) we do not need to go from one corner of the country to the other or make an expensive trip to visit a great museum in another city. What needs to be known is the existence of history and historical stories everywhere. If this is done, the financial difficulties will be minimized. Another important issue is providing parents' support. Before visiting museums and historical sites, parents meeting should be held and they should be informed about all aspects of the visits and activities. The support of the parents would considerably increase the motivation of teachers and students.

Note

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