

Examining Social Studies Teachers' Views on Branch Teachers' Committee Meetings*

Bahadır Kılcan¹, Osman Çepni², Ali Çağatay Kılınç³

¹Gazi University, Faculty of Education, Department of Turkish and Social Sciences Education, Ankara, Turkey

²Karabuk University, Faculty of Literature, Department of Geography, Karabuk, Turkey

³Karabuk University, Faculty of Literature, Department of Educational Sciences, Karabuk, Turkey

Correspondence: Ali Çağatay Kılınç, Karabuk University, Faculty of Literature, Department of Educational Sciences, Karabuk, Turkey.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the views of social studies teachers on branch teachers' committee meetings (BTCM). This study utilized a qualitative method, phenomenological design. The sample of the research is composed of 16 teachers working in public secondary schools in the central district of Karabük province during the spring school term of 2016-2017 and the participants were selected by convenient sampling method under purposeful sampling methods. The data of the study were collected through a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. Content analysis was used to analyze the data obtained from the participants. The results revealed that social studies teachers' views on BTCMs were collected under four main themes entitled "*things planned in BTCMs*", "*decisions made in BTCMs*", "*BTCMs in terms of the quality of social sciences teaching in school*" and "*The effectiveness of BTCMs*". Results of the study were discussed in line with the relevant literature and a number of suggestions were presented.

Keywords: social studies, teacher, branch teachers' committee meeting, qualitative research, phenomenology

1. Introduction

Schools are institutions that try to fulfill requirements of the culture they depend on within the scope of educational policies like almost all organizations in the society. The general purpose of these organizations is to train suitable workforce for the expectations of society through conducting qualified education. Schools conduct education and training activities to achieve this goal. The point to reach through these education and training activities is to help individuals who are the future of a country to gain knowledge, skills and value and allow them to grow physically and mentally in healthful and efficient manner. It is possible to reach these objectives thanks to qualified teachers, in other words, completing education-training applications successfully is closely associated with qualified and equipped teachers (Ağdelen & Ağdelen, 2006; Kalkan, 2016).

Schools involved in educational systems are the most fundamental service unit and classes are the places where training activities are conducted and learning is realized (Dönmez, 2004). The success of specified educational institutions and the sustainability of the success depend on the level of reaching educational objectives. Teachers are seen as the key element among the ones playing a role to reach the objectives specified (Gökyer, 2011; Küçük, Ayvaci & Altıntaş, 2004). In this context, teachers shoulder very important duties to make education and training activities impressive and efficient. For this reason, one of the most serious steps to raise the performance of schools is to enhance collaborative relationships among teachers (Küçük et al., 2004). As one of the most important actors of school climate, the interactions that occur in and out of the school between teachers may help to reach the educational goals. These interactions can be provided by acting in a concert and working in a cooperation as a team in order to reach the goals

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specified within the common instructional plans (Büte, 2007). Encouraging teachers to join in such team activities enthusiastically and make them feel the team spirit in educational activities are important in terms of creating an efficient learning and teaching environment within schoolhouse. Team spirit emerged in these institutions may be supposed to make many positive contributions such like ensuring a healthy coordination between teachers, providing an efficient communication and increasing employee motivation (Çelebi, Vuranok & Turgut, 2016). Furthermore, certain committees have been organized in Turkish schools so that branch teachers in educational institutions make decisions together and share their experiences regarding to the implementation of curriculum and maintain educational activities (Gökkyer, 2011). Branch teachers' committee is one of the several committees created as a main tool for participatory understanding in schools. Branch Teachers' Committee Meeting (BTCM) is composed of teachers teaching the same course and other educational personnel (Ministry of National Education (MoNE), 2017). BTCMs are the committees that are supposed to encourage strengthening relationships between branch teachers working in Turkish schools, making shared decisions to achieve success in education and performing and evaluating those decisions systematically (Küçük et al., 2004). In other words, Teachers Committees are the places where teachers teaching the same branches come together at certain times and then make decisions about the works to do together all year round and plan education-training activities (Sezer, Albez, Akan & Ada, 2014).

Teachers will be more likely to perform better works and achieve more success in groups at schools than being alone. It enables to achieve success as groups in educational organizations and also functions as a factor that encourages educational organizations to compete (Çelebi et al. 2016; Gajda & Koliba, 2007; Gökkyer, 2011; Güler, Altun & Türkdoğan, 2015). Teachers' working effectively with colleagues both from the same committees or with teachers from other branch committees is an important issue mentioned in various regulations of MoNE. Colleagues working as a team within the same committee may contribute not only to the school effectiveness and student achievement but also to the job satisfaction of teachers and organizational commitment (Çelebi et al., 2016). In Educational Boards and Committees Directive of Ministry of National Education (2017), it is indicated that BTCMs are liable to maintain education and training within a plan, act together in the period to implement instructional program, follow, evaluate, conclude the decisions made and use educational tools and requirements concerning buildings and facilities in an effective and productive way. In addition, the relevant directive emphasizes that groups are required to ensure an association around the educational institution, education region, district, province and country to achieve in the curriculum, learning areas and the targeted outcomes. Moreover, it is emphasized in the directive that while it is necessary to encourage students to learn, increase occupational motivation of teachers and create a relationship between educational institutions and environment, it is also important to be in cooperation with shareholders in the direction of concerns, demands and skills of students.

The cooperation between the teachers in BTCM may contribute to create an environment to allow students to learn at the highest level in cognitive, affective, aesthetics, moral and psychomotor aspect. In addition to this, social studies committee working in cooperation and intensive interaction may be supposed to play an important part to bring students in certain values like solidarity, assistance, collaboration which are important in the social studies course program. In this context, BTCMs that are composed of the teachers of social studies course consisting of many disciplines have a great importance. The reason is that, on one hand, behaviors of teachers working in social studies committees make contributions to fulfill the objectives in group regulations, and on the other hand the teachers of the group acting in concert, making decisions together, exchanging views and setting an example for students in this way may enable it to be directly associated with the acquisitions involved in the items of social studies curriculum and the outcomes of social studies course.

It is an important precondition to maximize the relations between teachers employed in the same school in order to increase the success of the students by means of increasing the quality of the education at schools (Utley, Basile & Rhodes, 2003). According to the related literature, the effectiveness of school boards and committees involved in the regulation such like the committee of teachers or the committee of branch teachers were examined and deficiencies in the operation of these committees were indicated by discussing the aspects of participation and decisions made. Literature review demonstrated that several research findings were achieved on teacher committees. For example, Akdemir (2006) aims to determine the problems encountered in high school history classes according to the branch teachers' committees reports, it was revealed that history teachers thought the problems that they faced during teaching should be discussed and solved in teacher committees. Sezer and others (2014) concluded that teachers committees are generally useful and they are conducted with a team spirit but institution managers have no contribution in revealing this conscious. Alim and Doğanay (2016) emphasized that it is required to increase the effectiveness and importance of BTCMs within the school and to conduct case studies with other committee member teachers teaching common school subjects. Moreover, it is demonstrated in the study of Acarbaş (2011) that BTCM has a very important place in geography education and board meetings should be conducted more than two times a year. The findings of the study

conducted by Demirtaş and Cömert (2006) aimed to determine the effectiveness of BTCMs and indicated that teachers thought they conducted BTCMs in accordance with the meeting objectives in an effective manner. As a result of the study of Güler, Altun and Türkdoğan (2015) examining views of math teachers on the effectiveness of BTCMs, it was seen that most of the teachers thought that BTCMs were conducted for the sake of formality and teachers did not have enough belief in the need for BTCMs. Küçük and others (2004) demonstrated that teachers thought success could be achieved when BTCMs were conducted efficiently and that these committees offered an environment of mutual interaction for teachers and the main objective of the decisions made was to enhance the academic success of students, but there weren't any plans concerning how can be the decisions that were made in the meetings put into practice. All these studies contributed to the literature; but there is no study which considers the views of social studies teachers on BTCMs. In this context, it is important to reveal the views of social studies teachers on branch teachers committee meetings in terms of giving an idea about both level to fulfill the issues aimed in MoNE's directive about committees; the reflection of this outcome on students and how group meetings can be conducted more effectively. In this direction, it has been sought to answer the following questions in the study:

1. What do social studies teachers plan in BTCM'S?
2. How do social studies teachers make decisions about the studies to do in BTCMs?
3. What kind of contributions do BTCMs make to the quality of social sciences teaching in school?
4. What do social studies teachers think of the effectiveness of BTCMs?

2. Method

2.1 Research Model

This study aims to demonstrate the views of social studies teachers on BTCMs utilized a qualitative method, phenomenological design. The main objective of phenomenological studies is to demonstrate meanings attributed by individuals to the phenomenon by examining people experiences (Creswell, 2007). As for Patton (2002), it is assumed that there is an essence or there are essences underlying an experience in phenomenological studies. In this context, this study focuses on examining the experiences of those teachers participating in BTCMs to reach the essence of experience.

2.2 Participants

Participants of the study were composed of 16 (9 males-7 females) social studies teachers employed in public schools in the central district of Karabuk province. Convenient sampling method under purposeful sampling was used to select the participants. Some researchers asserted that convenience sampling would make a contribution to the economy of the implementation process of study to be conducted and this contribution would bring benefit to the researchers (Patton, 2002; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

2.3 Data Collection Tools

A semi-structured interview form depending on the relevant literature and expert opinions was prepared by the researchers in order to collect the research data. The form included four questions about BTCMs. Accordingly, participants were asked the questions concerning what they planned in social studies course committee meetings, how they made decisions on the studies to do, what kind of contributions do BTCMs contribute to the quality of social sciences teaching in school and what they thought about the effectiveness of BTCMs. Besides, complementary questions offered by Glesne (2012) were included in these questions in order to both make participants understand the semi-structured interview questions better and gather more in-depth information from the participants. Researchers primarily reviewed the relevant literature and the studies conducted on this subject in order to prepare semi-structured interview form. Then, a draft interview form was prepared by considering the study purposes. This form was submitted for the opinions of three faculty members which two of them were specialists in measurement and evaluation and one of them is a specialist in curriculum and instruction. Several changes were done on the draft form according to the views of the specialists. After making some changes, the semi-structured interview form was administered to two social studies teachers employed in two different secondary schools located in Ankara to obtain information about the comprehensibility of the form. One of these two participants indicated that the question "what kind of contributions do BTCMs contribute to the quality of social sciences teaching in school" wasn't understood sufficiently, so the interview form was put into final form by making the relevant question simpler through the complementary questions added in the direction of suggestion of the participant.

2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

Researchers got in touch with some teachers they have known previously telephone; they also got in touch with others they didn't know through the administrators of schools and indicated that they wanted to interview concerning BTCMs

at their schools at any given time when they are available and at any place to be decided mutually. Before starting interviews at the places given by the participants, every participant was informed on the purposes of the study in detail and it was highlighted that they would be interviewed voluntarily and they could end the interview whenever they wanted and a tape recording was aimed to maintain the interview more affordably whether they gave permission. Participants indicated that tape recording would not be a problem and finally researchers made tape recordings throughout the interviews. Each interview took almost 30-35 minutes. A series of techniques were utilized in order to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability and confirm ability (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Prolonged engagement strategy was utilized to increase the credibility of the study, and in this context, it was aimed to collect in-depth data by prolonging the interviews as much as possible. Thick description strategy was utilized to maintain transferability of the study and detailed descriptions were included in every section of the study in this context and all the practices conducted were presented to the readers in detail. Inquiry audit strategy has been utilized in order to maintain the dependability of the study and in this context a faculty member that was not involved in the research group was informed on the whole process of the study in detail and the relevant faculty member was asked to examine the study report as a whole in terms of dependability. It was concluded that the study had a dependable structure as a result of the expert review. Next to the raw data themes and codes produced through the raw data were shared with a faculty member who studied in the field of social studies education and has some qualitative studies in order to maintain confirm ability of the study. This faculty member was asked to perform expert consensual validation. As a result of consensual validation by the field expert, the expert and the researchers agreed on the whole themes and codes.

2.5 Data Analysis

Content analysis was performed to analyze the study data. Content analysis and descriptive analysis are among the most used data analysis techniques in social studies (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2010). Categories and codes were obtained through the content analysis in the current study. Moreover, the statements of the participants were quoted directly and included into the report in order to support findings demonstrated inconsequence of the analysis and to demonstrate interesting and different points of the findings. Participants were coded as (T, 4 - T, 9, etc.) in the presentations of direct quotes.

3. Findings

As a result of the content analysis over the research data, research findings were collected under four main themes: “things planned in BTCMS”, “how decisions are made in BTCMS”, “BTCMS in terms of the quality of social sciences teaching in school” and “the effectiveness of BTCMs.” While forming the findings, opinions expressed by the participants for every question were gathered in codes and the relationship between the codes and the themes were presented via figures.

Things planned in BTCMs

Figure 1 illustrates the views of the participants on “things planned in BTCMs” and expression frequencies.

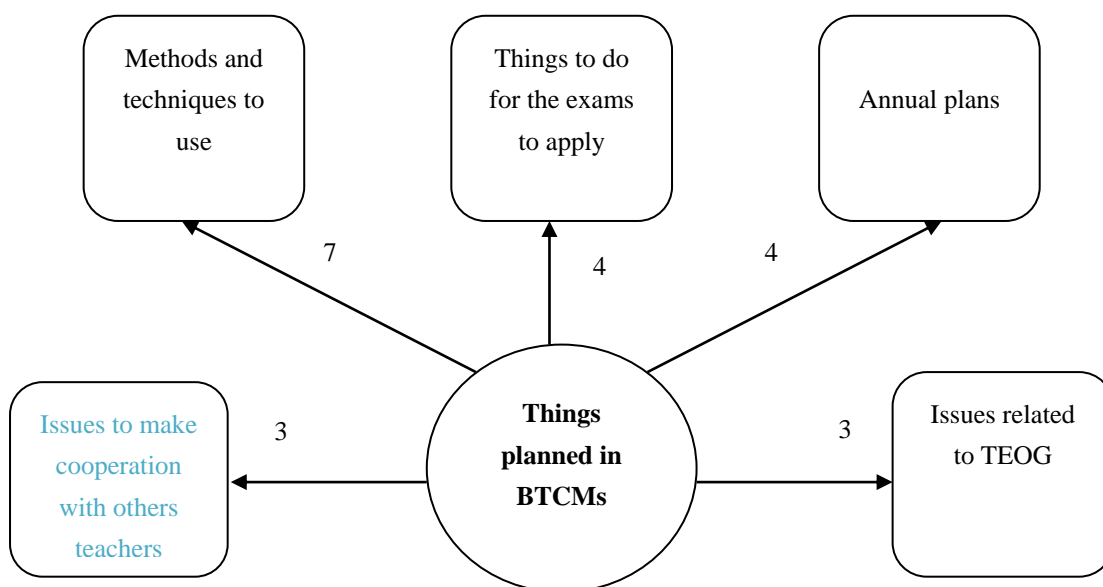


Figure 1. Teachers' views on things planned in Social Studies committees and the expressions frequencies

As it can be clearly seen from Figure 1 that the views of the participants on the things planned in BTCMs were gathered under five codes. These are “*methods and techniques to use*”, “*things to do for the exams to apply*”, “*issues to make cooperation with other teachers*”, “*annual plans to use in an academic year*” and “*issues concerning Transition from Primary to Secondary Education (TEOG)*”¹.

Methods and techniques to use. Most of the participants talked about methods and techniques to use in academic year during the BTCMs. This code is summarized by the expressions of the participants such in: “*We make plans in BTCMs concerning how we can use course hours most efficiently and make learning permanent for the students, how we can make students active at the highest level in courses and how we use other learning activities in the courses depending on curriculum...*”(T, 5) and “*We concentrate on certain issues such as how students could be taught such as growing tomatoes practically or through simulation method within the opportunities instead of transferring information to the students... in brief, we concentrate on embodying the issue.*” (T, 8). It is inferred from these expressions that participants plan in BTCMs how they can make students more active and make the teaching learning activities permanent during the academic year.

Things to do for the exams to apply. Some of the participants indicated that they made plans about measurement methods to apply during the term in BTCMs. This code is summarized by the expressions of participants such in: “*In BTCMs, decisions are made on the exams to use during the year...*” (T, 1) and “*We usually make decisions in BTCMs concerning written examinations and how we would hold these examinations and which methods we would use*” (T, 16). These expressions reveal the idea that participants discuss in BTCMs how they can evaluate students better during the term and they make studies concerning measurement tools should be used in this regard.

Annual plans. A group of the participants indicated that they did planning about the annual plans to apply in the term in BTCMs. It can be clearly seen from some expressions of the participants such in: “*Annual plans to use in the year are specified in BTCMs.*” (T, 9) and “*We specify what to do in the year (term), namely our annual plans.*” (T, 13). These expressions reveal the idea that participants work on annual plans which indicate things to do in an educational manner in the year in BTCMs.

Issues to make cooperation with other teachers. Some participants pointed out that they planned what kind of activities they might conduct with other committee members in the academic year in BTCMs. This statement is revealed by the expressions of the participants such in: “*In BTCMs, issues to make cooperation with other course teachers are specified.*”(T, 4) and “*We plan what we can do to increase the success with other committee members.*”(T,15). These expressions demonstrate that the participants do planning concerning what kind of activities they should conduct with other committee members in order that students achieve success in BTCMs.

Issues on TEOG. Some of the participants indicated they did planning concerning how success of the students could be raised in TEOG and how they could prepare students better for the exam. This situation is summarized by the expressions of the participants such in: “*We do studies about things to do to raise success in TEOG exam which students will take...*” (T, 12) and “*We make plans on the precautions to take in order to raise success level in TEOG.*” (T, 4). These expressions support the idea that participants make plans in BTCMs to raise the success of the students in TEOG exam.

How decisions are made in BTCMs

Figure 2 illustrates the views of the teachers on how decisions are made in Social Studies committees and expression frequencies.

¹TEOG refers to the System of Transition from Basic to Secondary Education starting from 2013-2014 Academic year of Ministry of National Education, Turkish Republic. According to this system, students in 6th, 7th and 8th grades were assigned to high schools with year-end grade point average added to central exam point of certain lessons. Since that time, system changed for several times and was abolished in 2017-2018 academic year.

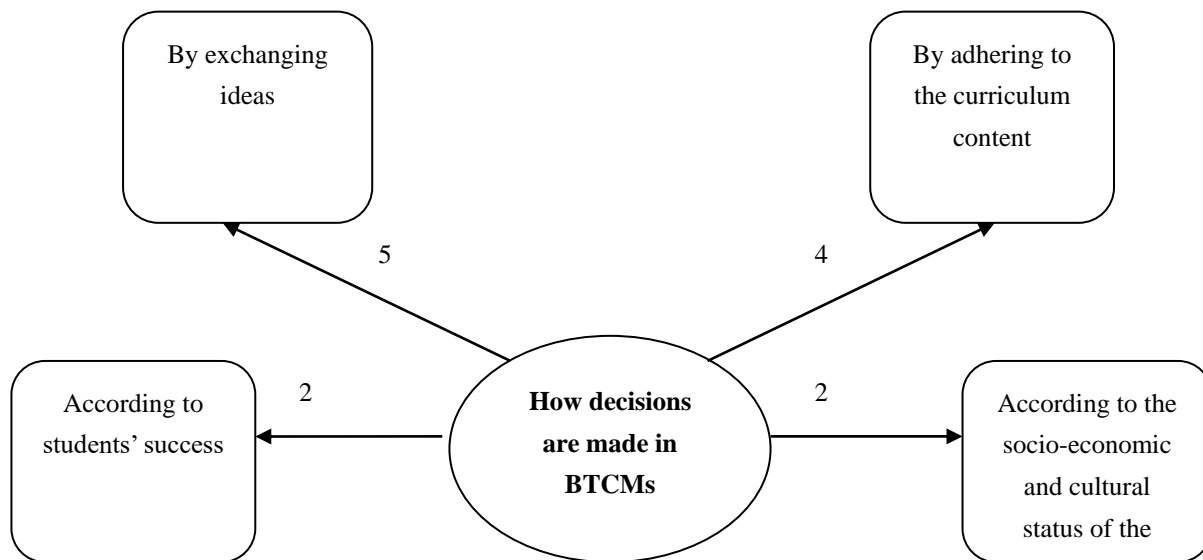


Figure 2. The views of the teachers on how decisions are made in Social Studies committees and expression frequencies. As can be referred from Figure 2 that demonstrates the views of the participants concerning how they made decisions in BTCMs were gathered under four codes. These are “*by exchanging ideas*”, “*by adhering to the curriculum content*”, “*according to students’ success*” and “*according to the socio-economic and cultural status of the students.*”

By exchanging ideas. Most of the participants expressed that they made the decisions in BTCMs by exchanging ideas with teachers constituting the group. This case becomes clear by the expressions of the participants such in: “*We find a common ground by expressing the ideas.*” (T, 11) and “*Decisions are made by exchanging ideas in these studies.*” (T, 12). These expressions reveal the idea that participants pay attention to each other’s ideas and teachers constituting the committee try to find a common ground and make decisions when they make a decision in BTCMs.

By adhering to curriculum content. Some participants declared that they adhered to the curriculum of social studies while making decisions in BTCMs. This case is indicated by the expressions of participants such in: “*We can’t make different decisions in BTCMs as we are liable to make decisions in accordance with the regulations of MoNE.*” (T, 9) and “*We make decisions by examining the curriculum.*” (T, 11). These expressions reveal the idea that the participants obey the curriculum of social studies while making decisions in BTCMs and they can’t go beyond in this regard.

According to the students’ success. A number of the participants expressed that they adhered to the curriculum of social studies while making decisions in BTCMs. This statement can be summarized by the expressions of the participants such in: “*Studies are projected to increase success level in our district by taking the success level of students into account. We hold a consultation with our friends on activities, methods and we also perform self-evaluation. Activity pool is constituted and the ones suitable for classes are used.*” (T,4) and “*We make decisions mutually with our committee leader in BTCMs for the purpose of bringing the current status further considering students’ level in the courses.*” (T, 5). These expressions mirrors that participants consider students’ success level in the courses when they make decisions in BTCMs and their purpose of making decisions is to raise students’ success in the courses.

According to the socio-economic and cultural statuses of the students. Some participants articulated that they paid regard to the socio-economic and cultural status of the students and consider these conditions while making decisions in BTCMs. This state is summarized by the expressions of the participants such in: “*We make plans considering the socio-economic and cultural status of the students.*” (T, 4) and “*Decisions are made in BTCMs by paying regard to the features of environment where the school is in.*” (T, 16). These expressions may indicate that participants make decisions considering both socio-economic features of the environment where students and school are in, and the cultural structure of the society when they make decisions in BTCMs.

BTCMs in terms of the quality of social sciences teaching in school

Figure 3 illustrates the views of the participants on “*BTCMs in terms of the quality of social sciences teaching in school*” and expression frequencies.

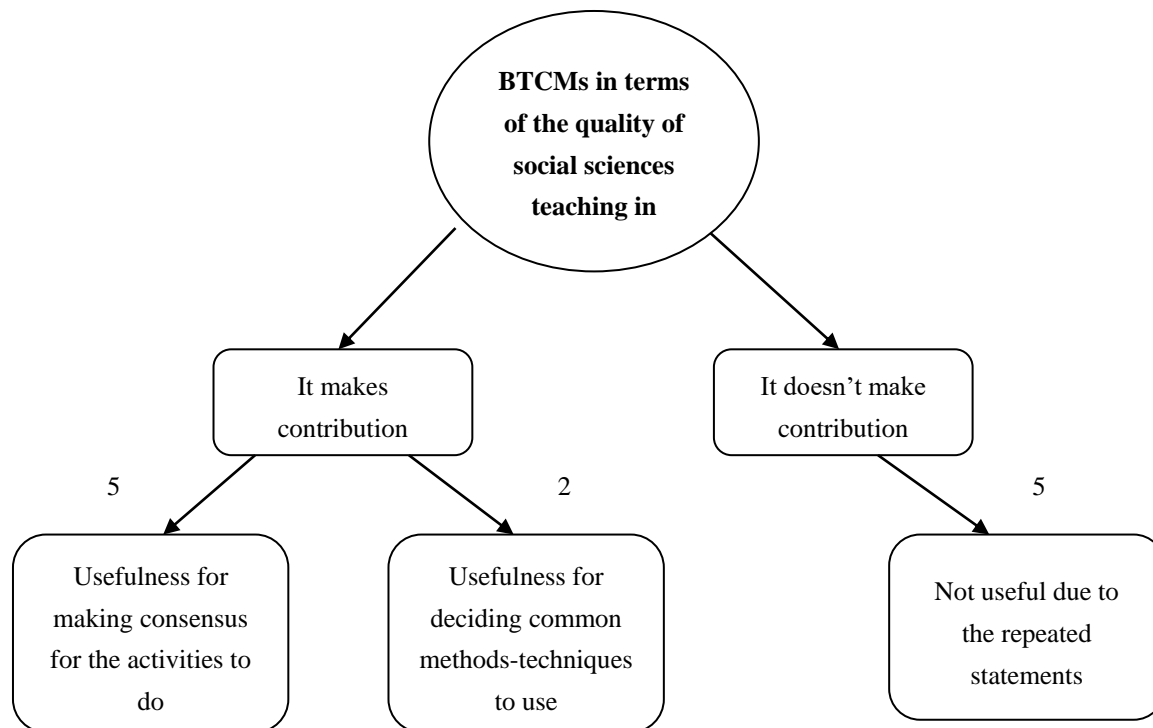


Figure 3. The views of the the participants on BTCMs in terms of the quality of social sciences teaching in school and expression frequencies

The views of the participants about BTCMs in terms of the contribution to the quality of social sciences teaching in school were collected under one positive and one negative main groups as it can be seen in Figure 3. It was argued in positive title that BTCMs were useful for increasing the quality of social sciences and it was expressed that it made contribution to “*making consensus on the activities to do*” and “*decide common methods and techniques to use*”. As for the negative title, it was indicated that BTCMs were “*not useful due to the repeated statements*”.

Usefulness for making consensus on activities to do. Some participants expressed that BTCMs were useful and this usefulness is that teachers make consensus together for the activities to do. This case is demonstrated by the expressions of the participants such in: “*BTCMs are the environment in which it is required to exchange ideas. It is useful if teachers are open to research.*” (T, 8) and “*BTCMs have an effect on teaching the lessons coordinately.*” (T, 1). These expressions highlight the idea that participants think BTCMs are useful activities and this usefulness is that teachers in the committee make consensus on the activities to conduct during the term.

Usefulness for deciding common methods and techniques to use. Several participants declared that BTCMs were useful and this usefulness was associated with an opportunity to decide methods and techniques to use mutually during the term. This statement is summarized by the expressions of the participants such in: “*Communication with committee members and subject-method-activity consultation have positive influence on every teacher. Everybody might learn something from others.*” (T, 4) and “*We get more succesful outcomes when we determine with branch teachers what kind of paths we will follow in learning-teaching processes and how we will motivate students.*” (T, 5). These expressions highlight the idea that participants think BTCMs are useful activities, and this usefulness results from determining the methods and techniques that can be used during the term with other teachers mutually.

Not useful due to the repeated statements. Some of the participants stated that BTCMs were not useful activities because they served as the recurrence of the previous year every year. This case can be seen in the expressions of participants such in: “*Unfortunately, we make time honored decisions in BTCMs every year but most of the decisions made are not put into practice.*” (T, 9), “*They make no contribution. The reason is that they are conducted for the sake of formality.*” (T, 12) and “*I don't think they are useful. Everything remains on the papers. They are conducted every year in order to fulfill this obligation.*” (T, 15). These expressions show that participants think BTCMs are not useful activities, and they consider the reason for that is that decisions made in BTCMs do not affect the practice.

The effectiveness of BTCMs

Figure 4 illustrates views of the participants on “*the effectiveness of BTCMs*” and expression frequencies.

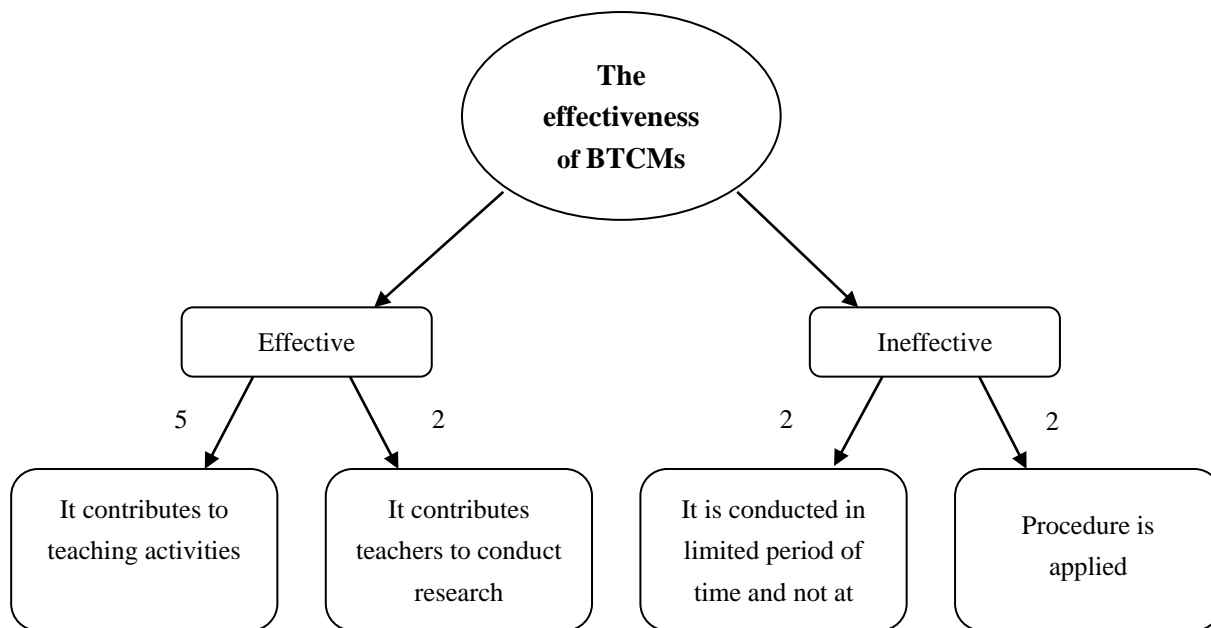


Figure 4. The views of the participants on the effectiveness of Social Studies committees and expression frequencies

The views of participants on the effectiveness of BTCMs were organized as two main groups as “effective” and “ineffective” in Figure 4. The participants who thought that BTCMs were effective expressed that BTCMs “made contribution to teaching activities and to teachers’ conducting research”. As for those who thought BTCMs were ineffective, BTCMs were “conducted in limited periods of time and not at periodical intervals” and “procedure is applied”.

It contributes to teaching activities. Some participants expressed that BTCMs were effective and the reason for this was that it contributed to the teaching learning activities to be conducted in the year. This case is summarized by the expressions of the participants such in: “Naturally, these meetings have influences on teaching lessons efficiently. We gain different perspectives as different teaching practices are expressed” (T, 11) and “It contributes to effective teaching because it allows for information sharing.” (T, 12). These expressions demonstrate that participants think BTCMs are effective and the reason for that is that teachers in BTCMs determine teaching learning activities to use during the term as a result of the consensus made.

It contributes teachers to conduct research. Some participants articulated that BTCMs were effective and the reason was that it contributed to teachers’ conducting research. This case is summarized by the expressions of the participants such in: “It won’t be wrong if we say that teachers develop new methods since they have to do research and modernize themselves unavoidably through these committees.” (T, 11) and “I think they are important committees as they lead teachers to do research.” (T, 5). These expressions demonstrate that the participants think BTCMs are effective as they lead teachers to conduct research.

It was conducted in limited period of time and not at periodical intervals. Some participants stated that BTCMs were ineffective as they were conducted in limited periods of time and not at periodic intervals. This case is demonstrated by the expressions of participants such in: “Unfortunately, nowadays BTCMs are conducted only for 10 minutes and decisions are typed on the computer. Teachers are right as well. What do you expect from BTCMs which are generally started at the end of lessons, at the moments when we are tired and hungry at most, even thirty minutes after the classes end?” (T, 4) and “They are not conducted regularly. And they are fit into short times even though they are conducted from time to time. Generally, at the end of classes...” (T, 14). These expressions support the idea that the participants think that BTCMs are ineffective as they aren’t conducted regularly in a longer and proper periods of time.

Procedure is applied. Some participants pointed out that BTCMs were ineffective and the reason was that committees were the practice of procedures only due to the obligation instead of expressing new ideas. This case is demonstrated by the expressions of the participants such in: “BTCMs are not effective as they are conducted as perfunctory. They are conducted as an obligation and the decisions taken are not put into practice.” (T, 12) and “They are ineffective. Only the procedure is applied.” (T, 14). These expressions can be interpreted that participants think BTCMs are ineffective because they are often conducted only for the sake of fulfilling the procedures.

4. Discussion and Results

This study was conducted to determine the views of social studies teachers BTCMs. The results of the study demonstrated that participants made plans in BTCMs mostly on methods and techniques to use in classes and things to do for examinations to apply; and they made decisions mostly by exchanging ideas and adhering to curriculum content. Furthermore, while some participants expressed that BTCMs made contributions in terms of the quality of social sciences teaching in school, some of them stated there was no contribution. Finally, while some participants indicated that BTCMs were effective as they contributed to the education conducted at school, some of them considered BTCMs as a procedure and found them ineffective.

First, the views of social studies teachers on things they plan in BTCMs was examined in this study. The results demonstrate that social studies teachers make plans mostly on teaching methods and techniques to use in the classes and what are the things to do for exams to hold in BTCMs. Moreover, it is seen that they project things to do with other teachers, annual plans to use during the year and issues concerning TEOG. It may be considered as a positive finding that teachers make discussions in BTCMs to develop the quality of education conducted at schools. It may be considered also as a positive finding that teachers make discussions in BTCMs concerning what the methods and techniques are to use in courses. Yet, BTCMs are the committees set in order to strengthen the education of that lesson by gathering teachers responsible for teaching the same school subject. In other words, teachers gathered at the same BTCMs are supposed to determine the precautions to take in order to teach the lessons more efficiently, and to discuss different views on teaching practice (Albaz et al., 2014; K ü ç ü k et al., 2004). Furthermore, it may be argued that BTCMs have an important function to determine primary standards which will direct practice. Yet, it is emphasized in the directive for educational boards and committees published by MoNE (2017, p.6) that BTCMs are organized in order to “project and coordinate the education across the province, raise the quality of education and training, develop views and suggestions on the education and ensure communication, convenience and cooperation between the same fields.” While examining the findings of the present study in detail, it is seen that participants regard BTCMs as an opportunity to cooperate with other teachers and exchange ideas on the issues of education. In this context, it is possible to argue that MoNE and teachers agree on the basic functions of BTCMs. On the other hand, one of the most important points expressed by the participants about the things planned in BTCMs is plans on the exams held at schools and exams held in national level as well. It has been determined in the directive published by MoNE (2017) that one of the most important duties of BTCMs is to evaluate the results of the school-oriented and national exams. In this context, the participants expressed that they make plans in BTCMs both on the exams conducted at schools and TEOG so it may be interpreted that exams are important agenda items in BTCMs.

Another finding of the study is how social studies teachers involved in the present study make decisions in BTCMs. The results show that participants make decisions by exchanging ideas in BTCMs and by adhering to curriculum content. As mentioned above, BTCMs are the committees created so that teachers could exchange ideas on the objectives of lessons for which they are responsible to teach, methods and techniques to use to achieve these objectives and exams to be held concerning the lesson (MoNE, 2017). Considering this, it is found that they comprehend BTCMs as a platform to exchange ideas about the lessons. Furthermore, it is seen that the participants expressed that adhering to the curriculum content for the decisions made is an important factor, as well. While examining the views of the participants carefully in this regard, it is clear that especially some participants expressed that curriculum and legislation are principal variables in making decisions in BTCMs and that it is out of question to go beyond these variables. It can be argued that it might have adverse effects on teachers’ motivation participating in BTCMs in terms of demonstrating and discussing different ideas and opinions, and it has risks to turn these committees into an application which are conducted as required by the legislation or qualified as formality. In parallel with this statement, Demirtaş and Cömert (2006) demonstrate that teachers mostly care about conducting the relevant course properly in the direction of curriculum; however, they allocate the least time to examine occupational works. Thus, another finding of the study is associated with the views of the participants on BTCMs in terms of the quality of social sciences teaching in school and findings demonstrate that some participants think that BTCMs have become unproductive as they have a usual structure and teachers started to consider them as a formality. Again according to the views of the participants, it is understood that this vicious circle is fed as the decisions made remain on the reports of committees and have no effects on the practice. While examining the relevant literature, we encounter a limited number of studies in which similar findings were produced (Alm & Doğanay, 2016; Güler et al., 2015). As for findings of Büte and Balcı (2010), it is demonstrated that preschool teachers think that decisions made in BTCMs across the city are not put into practice and thus BTCMs turn into vicious committees repeated for the sake of formality. On the other hand, it is seen that some participants expressed that BTCMs make contribution to the education as they have a structure which facilitate to make consensus together concerning teaching and learning practices to conduct and the educational methods and techniques to use in lessons. There are several studies in the relevant literature in which similar findings were reached (Demirtaş & Cömert, 2006). In this context, it

may be argued that different findings are achieved concerning contributions of BTCMs to the quality of social sciences teaching in school and there is no agreement in question. This case can be interpreted as a sign that there is a need for more research findings in this regard.

Finally, this study focused on demonstrating the views of social studies teachers on the effectiveness of BTCMs. It is seen that the views of the participants are divided into two main title as in the findings concerning in the third question of the study. Accordingly, some participants think BTCMs are effective while some of them think they are ineffective. According to the participants who think BTCMs are effective, the reason is that it contributes to teaching activities and it leads teachers to conduct research. As for other participants, they indicated that BTCMs are conducted in limited periods of time and not at periodical intervals and that they are applied only for the sake of obligation instead of offering new ideas, and therefore, they are ineffective. While examining the views of the participants, it is observed that participants who consider BTCMs as effective expressed that different teaching practices are discussed in these meetings, information is shared, teachers have opportunities to improve themselves in an occupational sense and new teaching methods are discussed. When considering BTCMs are organized in order to ensure interaction and coordination between teachers who work together and are liable to teach a particular school subjects in provinces and districts in the macro level and at the same school in the micro level (MoNE, 2017), it is thought that BTCMs may bear an important function in order to develop the quality of education in schools. Thus, it is discussed in a series of study that establishing a strong communication between the teachers and creating several platforms in which teachers can act collaboratively at schools would make important contribution to develop the quality of the education at the schools (Conzemius and O'Neill, 2001; Hallinger and Heck, 2010; Harris & Lambert, 2013). Furthermore, as for participants who have negative views on BTCMs and regard them as ineffective, they indicated that these meetings are conducted in limited periods of time and not at periodic intervals and turned into a process in which procedures are applied rather than an organization in which new ideas are shared and discussed. In other words, the views of the participants who have negative ideas on BTCMs generally results from the mode to perform BTCMs. In the literature, there is a range of study findings which support this comment. For example, research findings of K ü ç ü k and others (2004) demonstrate that one of the most important factors preventing BTCMs to be effective is that the practice of the decisions made is not planned enough. As for research findings of Güler and others (2015), it is demonstrated that the effectiveness of BTCMs decrease as teachers participate in BTCMs without preparing sufficiently and the decisions made in the previous BTCMs don't become a current issue in new meetings.

The results of the study demonstrate that BTCMs have an important function in the development of teaching social sciences, but the effectiveness of BTCMs is limited because of the failures encountered in practice. In this context, school based precautions can be taken in order to conduct BTCMs effectively within the period for which school manager will be the leader. BTCMs may become an important mechanism once a school culture is established to ensure the increase of information sharing between school staff, the discussion about different ideas and practices to develop the quality of education and to increase cooperation and interaction between teachers. BTCMs may become important sharing and discussion platforms when professional improvements sustained by teachers and more contributions made by them to increase the quality of the education are regarded as a value shared between school members. In addition, it might be useful in this regard to discuss the effects of decisions taken in BTCMs on teaching practices and to follow the relevant process through the peer reviews or reviews performed by the school administrators. Depending on the study findings, it may be suggested for policymakers to ensure BTCMs are planned specific to the schools, instead of aiming to secure uniformity for the practice across the city or district, and to provide schools with more autonomy in this regard. Finally, it may be suggested to conduct further studies especially in a qualitative and mixed method in this regard and examine the views of the participants on BTCMs in detail in those studies since the study findings achieved on the relevant issue are limited and most of the studies were conducted in quantitative research method.

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