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Service-learning projects' contribution to students' development

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The aim of the research is to determine the contribution of the use of the service-learning (SL) approach in social studies courses to the students' development. The participants of this research, which was carried out using qualitative research methodology, are 15 students and two social studies teachers who participated in SL projects within the scope of social studies course. Students had a 16-week experience of SL. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and teachers. The content analysis technique was used to analyze the obtained data. The result of the research revealed that the contribution of using SL approach in the social studies course contributed to the academic, personal, social, and citizenship development of the students. **Keywords:** service-learning, social studies, active citizen, citizenship education

INTRODUCTION

Service-learning (SL) is a pedagogical approach that gives students the opportunity to associate what has been learned in the classroom with real life, and at the same time one that contributes to both their and the development of the society. In the literature, it is indicated that the concept of SL is based on John Dewey's experiential learning approach (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Koliba, 2004; Skinner & Chapman, 1999; VanWynsberghe & Andruske, 2007). Sheckley and Keyton (1997) state that SL started to develop in the late 1980s in primary and secondary schools and define it as a "teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic studies to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities" (Pritchard & Whitehead, 2004). Although in the literature the terms SL and community service are used interchangeably, in fact they differ from one another. Community service is defined as community service activities that are non-curriculum-based. It can be arranged by school mandatory or voluntary and usually not comprise clearly stated learning objectives, reflection or critical analysis activities. On the other hand SL is defined as community service activities that are curriculum-based. It integrates classroom instruction with community service activities and comprise clearly stated learning objectives, reflection or critical analysis activities (Skinner & Chapman, 1999). However it is a way to develop notions of reciprocity, meaningful action and purposeful engagement between the individual and the local community so as to make the world a better place and enables students to understand what it means to be human (Hughes & Acedo, 2016). Service-learning is a pedagogy in which community service is integrated into academic courses and includes a process of critical reflection that helps students connect their activities to their learning (Weisman, 2021). To summarize, in SL the students gain responsibility of citizenship as they seek a solution for the needs and problems of the society, and simultaneously acquire the learning outcomes of the respective course.

As teachers apply the approach they are required to make sure that SL projects designed by the students consist of the stages of research, planning and preparation, action, reflection and sharing-celebrating. Below are orderly explicated the stages of an SL project (NSLC, 2009):

- **Research:** At this stage, the students work on specifying the needs and problems of the society. At this point the teacher's duty is to help the students decide on which of the specified needs and problems they are going to work.

- **Planning and preparation:** The students develop an action plan. At this point, they can receive support from their teacher. In the action plan people's responsibilities, time chart, how the material resources are going to be obtained, activities they are contemplating to conduct have to be stated in detail.

- **Action:** At this stage the students find the opportunity to realize their planned service activities. During this process, while personally developing the students also contribute to the society.
- **Reflection:** Includes activities that help students to understand SL experiences, and reflect about their connection to themselves, their community and their learnings at schools. With the stage of reflection, students have the opportunity to reflect on all stages.
- **Sharing-celebrating:** Students share the results of SL project with other students, teachers and people in the community.

Since following all these stages by considering their unique characteristics will ensure the effective implementation of SL approach, the contribution to the students will increase as much. The Search Institute (2000) explained the positive effects on students participating in SL projects or activities as contribution to positive attitudes towards adults, empowerment of community involment, gaining learning responsibility and positive values, developing social skills and positive identity (Roehlkepartain et al., 2000).

Pritchard and Whitehead (2004) stated that the use of SL approach increases the cognitive and academic development of students and their sense of social responsibility and strengthens their participation and problem skills as citizens. Hok-ka et al. (2016), and Natadjaja and Yuwono (2019) revealed that the experience of SL improves students' civic responsibility. Along with this, Yook (2018) stated that it is beneficial for students in terms of personal development, clarification of career goals, sense of connection with and helping the community. Furthermore, Chuang (2019) stated that students improve their academic knowledge and problem-solving skills.

Reviews in the literature show that students participating in SL activities or projects have an increased awareness and responsibility regarding the community. Furthermore, it can be seen that the integration with the community is provided, and that SL activities or projects lead to development in academic, personal and social terms. Thanks to SL approach, students have the opportunity to become active citizens by contributing to the society(s) in a local, national and global scale. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2000) recommends the utilization of SL approach in the social studies course as it will help achieve the goal of raising active citizens.

Importance and Purpose

SL approach is one of the teaching-learning approaches that can be used in the social studies course. Abroad there are many studies on SL approach and this approach is included in the curricula. However, the studies are generally concentrated on university and high school levels. It is thought that the fact that the participant group of the research are 6th grade students will contribute to the field as there are only few studies on SL in Turkey. It is expected that this approach will contribute to the implementation of new research by using in teaching both social studies and different courses. The aim of the research is to determine the contribution of SL approach in the social studies course to the students' development.

METHOD

In this part of the research, information about the research model, study group, data collection, and analysis is given.

This research was carried out using qualitative research methodology in order to obtain in-depth information about the contribution of the use of SL approach in the social studies course to the development of the students. The purpose of qualitative research is to understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, the students had a 16-week experience of SL. Qualitative research was preferred in order to reveal how they made sense of this experience.

Participants

The participant group of the research consists of 15 students studying in the 6th grade of a private educational institution in Istanbul and two social studies teachers working in this institution. In determining the study group of the research, criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was preferred. In purposive sampling, situations with rich information are selected so that the research can be conducted in depth and in criterion sampling, all situations that meet the predetermined criteria are studied (Patton, 2002). In the social studies program of grade 6, social participation is among the skills to be taught directly. Since the following expressions within the description of this skill are congruent with the content of SL approach, it was determined as a criterion that the participants are 6th grade students: "Generating ideas, communicating this idea to those around them, negotiating, discussing, planning, reconciling and taking action, serving the group, institution, social organizations and society as a leader or follower in order to meet the needs of their immediate environment and society (MoNE, 2010)". In order to keep the identity of the participants confidential, students were given the pseudonyms S-1, S-2, etc., and teachers were given the pseudonyms T-1 and T-2.

The study was carried out with the permission of the private school administrators and the students' parents.

Data Collection

Under the guidance of both the researcher and their teachers, the students in the social studies course carried out a total of 15 SL projects on 10 different topics for 16 weeks. While 12 of them were practical projects prepared to contribute to nature, animals and people, three were projects prepared for the purpose of raising awareness in the society. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and students in order to determine the contribution of SL activities to students. Semi-structured interviews allow participants to describe the world they perceive with their own thoughts, and the interview questions are flexible

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While preparing the interview questions, efforts were made to ensure that the questions were clear and non-directing. Expert opinions from two competent social studies academicians who conducted qualitative research were obtained. The interview questions were revised accordingly and given their final form. Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with 15 students from the two campuses of the private school where the research was conducted, taking account of principles of volunteering. In these interviews, 11 open-ended questions were asked. Individual face-to-face interviews were held with two social studies teachers, and 10 open-ended questions were asked. The interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and then transcribed using a computer.

Data Analysis

The data of the research were analyzed by content analysis. Content analysis allows for an in-depth analysis of the data obtained and the emergence of previously unclear themes (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). It also facilitates systematization in the analysis of data obtained from interviews (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). The interview texts were carefully read and coded by the researcher. Categories were obtained from the codes, and from these categories the themes were obtained. While obtaining the categories from the codes, the classification related to the academic, personal and social categories included in SL meta-analysis study of Conway et al. (2009) was used. The academic category comprises knowledge, ability to use knowledge, academic GPA and motivation; the personal category consists of the individual's feelings and thoughts about herself/himself; the social category consists of the individual's relationship and interaction with others. In order to ensure the reliability of the content analysis, the coding made by a researcher who is an expert in the field of social studies education was examined. In regard to the formula developed by Miles and Huberman (1994), the reliability value between the coding of both researchers was 0.88 for the student interview form; for the teacher interview form, it was found to be 0.86. In order to increase the reliability of the research, the students' statements on which the codes are based, and the frequency of these codes are presented in **Table 1**. Direct quotations from the statements of the participants are frequently included.

Table 1. Students' opinions about the contribution of service-learning approach to the development of students

Category	Codes	Participants	F	Total
Academic contributions	Learning new information/contributing to lessons	S1, S3, S6, S10, S11, S13, & S14	7	14
	Reinforcement of previous knowledge	S1 & S15	2	
	Learning/application of scientific research steps	S2 & S5	2	
	Taking part in a service-learning project for the first time	S5 & S8	2	
	Increase in motivation towards lessons	S10	1	
Personal contributions	Being happy because it is useful	S6 & S8	2	11
	Realizing that there are different lives	S2 & S7	2	
	Empathizing	S2 & S7	2	
	Increase in self-confidence	S10	1	
	Developing a sense of equity	S7	1	
	Being creative	S15	1	
	Being sensitive	S1	1	
	Being respectful to people	S2	1	
Social contributions	Working collaboratively	S6, S9, & S15	3	7
	Development of communication skills	S7 & S13	2	
	Leadership	S5	1	
	Understanding that people are equal	S4	1	
Contributions to citizenship	Awareness about community issues	S9, S10, & S13	3	12
	Feeling responsible in the face of social problems	S10 & S11	2	
	Learning what can be done to solve problems of the society	S9 & S15	2	
	Being an active citizen	S10 & S15	2	
	Being able to look at societal problems from a different perspective	S15	1	
	Learning to be useful to society	S6	1	
	Increasing interest in social problems	S10	1	
Total				**44**

RESULTS

The findings obtained as a result of analysis of the research data are gathered in **Table 1** and explained in detail.

Contribution of Service-Learning Approach

The contribution of SL approach to the development of students was tried to be determined by analyzing the interviews with students and teachers. As a result of the analysis, four categories emerged as the contribution of SL projects to the development of the students. Those are the academic, personal and social development of students and the contribution to their citizenship. The identified categories are presented in **Table 1**.

Academic Contributions

When in **Table 1** the contribution of SL projects to the academic development of the students is examined, the opinion most expressed by the students is "learning new information/contributing to lessons". The other opinions are "reinforcement of previous knowledge", "learning/application of scientific research steps", "taking part in an SL project for the first time" and

"increase in motivation towards lessons". For example, S1 said, *"In fact, I knew something implicit on the subject, I learned better when I researched it fully, I both refreshed my knowledge and learned new things. I think it is useful to me."* She emphasized that she reinforced her existing knowledge and learned new information. Similarly, S14 also mentioned that she learned new information about the project subject and expressed it, as follows: *"As I was doing research, I learned about how much fish diversity has decreased in the seas of Türkiye, for example. … I learned about the seas."* S6 explained the academic contributions to various subjects with the following words: *"It contributed to the Science lesson in terms of getting to know living creatures. Its contribution to the social studies course was to learn to be useful to society. To Turkish in the form of some language mistakes and corrections."* S15 stated that the knowledge gained was reinforced with the words *"It helped me to better understand why non-governmental organizations exist and what tasks they do."* S2 and S5 stated that thanks to SL project they had the opportunity to apply the scientific research steps they learned in the social studies course. While S2 said *"We learned the steps of research in the social studies course. It has been very helpful in this regard."* S5 expressed her thoughts with the following words, *"After we learned the scientific research steps, we tried the research. This also had an impact on my social studies course."* Additionally, stating that she took part in a SL project for the first time, S5 drew attention to the difference compared to other projects with the following statement: *"I have not been involved in SL projects before. There are projects done at school, but not this style."* Finally, S10 expressed the positive effect of the project on her subjects with the words *"my motivation has increased a little more"*.

In their interview, T1 pointed to the difference compared to the projects they had conducted so far with the following statement:

> "We always carried out similar projects, mostly initiated by teachers in which teachers set the goals, little children were collecting aid only as passive participants … But here I saw that the children can organize more things than us and do their job better."

T1 emphasized that the students were responsible for the whole project and that they were successful. T2 also stated that this project prepared by the students was different from the previous ones, as follows:

> "We used to say that there is a reality called global warming, so let's support the "Natural Life Protection Association". Here now the child has felt the problem her/himself and has also taken initiative for a solution … When we permit them, they can already identify the problems. That's why this is such an important thing."

From the statements of both students and teachers, it is understood that at the school projects in the style of SL projects have not been carried out before.

The teachers explained the academic contribution of SL approach to the students, as follows:

> T1: "It developed them academically because they did a research on where we can help. They realized that there are many problems with women, children, the elderly and animals etc. … in our country that need help. They also realized that there is a very intense insensitivity. For this reason, they engaged in an academic research, in fact, they this way revealed the socio-political situation of the country."

With these words, T1 explained in this context the academic contribution by stating that the students learned about the country's problems, about where they could help, and about the country's socio-political situation. T2 said, *"I think it will have positive effects in the long run, as we contribute to the children's development academically in terms of skills and values."* and emphasized the long-term academic effect of SL approach. From the opinions of both students and teachers, it has been revealed that the contribution of SL approach to the academic development of students is learning new information, reinforcing previous knowledge, experiencing SL project for the first time, learning to conduct scientific research, and an increase in motivation for lessons.

Personal Contributions

As it can be seen in **Table 1**, about the contribution of SL projects to the personal development of students the opinions expressed by the students are "being happy because it is useful", "realizing that there are different lives", "empathizing", "increase in self-confidence", "developing a sense of equity", "being creative" and "being respectful to people". S6 thinks that as a result of her project, she is beneficial to the society and shared her feelings as follows: *"I feel sad when I hear that animals suffer, but I am happy because I know that we will help them. I think I'm useful to society and I'm happy."* S8 expressed the happiness he felt for being useful with the following words *"It was a very nice feeling, I helped animals for the first time like this, I was happy. I love animals very much."* Both students are happy to help stray animals through SL projects. Noticing people living in life standards different from her/his own, S2 stated that she approached with an empathetic point of view and said,

> "Learning that there are different lives, how lucky we have added a lot to us. I'm trying to be a little more respectful towards people. I try to be very respectful to both my family and my friends. Because there are people who are in that situation, you understand much better when you look at them through their eyes."

Similarly, S7 discovered that there are different lives. He expressed that he gave up on living focusing on himself and developed a sense of justice, empathized with following words: *"I always thought it was me in this world, I did not know what the others were like. This project improved my feelings and thoughts, now I can think more comprehensively. I do not think of myself alone anymore, I have developed justice in myself."* S10 expressed her increase in self-confidence as follows: *"I realized that from the planning stage to this time we were able to make with a specific plan, and my self-confidence increased a little more."* S15 explained that his

creativity increased with the following words: *"I designed a poster, on the poster there was that we would not live in a peaceful world by mistreating animals. I think I can be more creative. It would have been a better project if we had used our time well."*

T2 of the social studies teachers, evaluated the contribution of SL project to the personal development of the students, as follows:

> "… It caused an increase in self-confidence in the child. His/her teacher did not say come on, you are doing such a project, s/he chose it herself/himself and determined the subject of the project. In that sense, I think it contributes to increasing certain competencies such as self-confidence and entrepreneurship in their personal development."

T2 emphasized their increase in self-confidence. As can be understood from the teacher's words, the students deciding on the subject of the project on their own, designing the project on their, and the fact that they are responsible for all its stages showed them that they could succeed and be beneficial to the society if they wanted to. Therefore, this experience has increased their self-confidence.

From the opinions of both students and teachers, it has been seen that the contribution of SL approach to the personal development of students is being happy, discovering different lives, empathy, increase in self-confidence, development of sense of justice, being creative, being respectful to people and entrepreneurship.

Social Contributions

If we evaluate the contribution of SL projects to the social development of students; as seen in **Table 1**, the opinions expressed by the students are about "working in cooperation", "development of communication skills", "leadership" and "understanding that people are equal". While, for example, S6 explains her thoughts with the following words: *"I think that SL project has a contribution to all of us. First of all, I think we learned to work in groups, to be together in the group."*, S9 states that thanks to the project he learned to do group work with the following words *"I am glad to learn that I am or can be in such a group work, that I can do things like this."* Some of the students also mentioned that their communication skills have improved while explaining the contribution of SL project to their social development. S7 stated that his communication skills improved further with the project, with the words *"My sense of communication is good, not to brag, but my communication skills have improved with the project."* S13 expressed his thoughts as follows, *"I think the social contribution of the project to me is communication."* S5 stated that her desire to be a leader increased after the experience she made using following words: *"Because I am the leader of the group, I need to see what everyone is doing, so I try to gather the group. We talk almost every day. That's why the desire for leadership aroused in me."* It can be understood from the words *"I understood that everyone is equal, so everyone has the right to be happy."* that S4 forged a link between equality and happiness.

The teachers' thoughts on the social contribution of SL projects to students are given in the following. T1 expressed that the students learned group work and that the activities they conducted in the scope of the project were important regarding the development of communication skills with the following words:

> "Children who did not get along very well were in the same group, but they worked together. It is an important development to act professionally, to carry out the business together, not to be personal. They had to make contact to other grade levels too much. They went to other classes, made their announcements, made them aware, conducted awareness campaigns. They told other classes their problems, which was important for their social development. They went to markets, left leaflets, collected money from their neighbors, etc."

T2 discussed the contribution of the project to students in terms of group work, group and social sharing and said the following:

> "First of all, they did group work, for example, there were students who really had problems with group work… Seeing that even those students could do something in the group and those students having a little responsibility, I think, was good in terms of relationships, too. These children came together from time to time during lunch breaks, it was good in terms of group sharing, social sharing."

From the teachers' statements it is understood that the students who experience problems in group work or who cannot get along with each other succeed in working in cooperatively. From the statements of both students and teachers, it has been determined that the contribution of SL project to the social development of students is the development of cooperation and communication skills, the awakening of the desire to be a leader and understanding the equality of people.

Contributions to Citizenship

When **Table 1** is examined, the students' views on the contribution of SL projects to themselves as citizens are related to "awareness about social problems", "feeling responsible in the face of social problems", "learning what can be done to solve social problems", "being an active citizen", "being able to look at societal problems from a different perspective", "increasing interest in social problems", and "learning to be useful to society". For example, S9 states that thanks to SL project he became aware of the problems of the society and expressed it with the following words: *"I learned about the problems our society experiences, I became aware. The events are upsetting because it would be better if we were a more developed country or a country with less problems. In that regard, I am sad."* S13 stated that he did not have enough knowledge about the subject of the project before and that he became aware thanks to the project with the following words: *"Some people are protected by law, some are not. I did not know well before I researched violence against women. When I researched this, I learned some institutions and organizations better; I became*

more aware of this issue." S10 explains that her interest in the social problems has increased, she has become more conscious, she feels responsible for solving problems and that people should act with the following words: *"I learned a little more about this subject, I became more interested and conscious. I felt a little bit more responsible, not everyone can keep quiet about it, and someone has to do something. I started to feel responsible for this issue."* S11 said: *"We learned in the social studies course that a plant was about to become extinct. I thought something should be done about it. I actually did not expect to do such things from seeds. But when I researched it I learned that it was done."* and expressed that he felt responsible and by doing research decided to conduct a project on collecting fruit seeds. By saying *"We learned what we can do to solve the problems in our society. We are children, we may be short, but in terms of mind, we are not much different from adults. Because we can do things by using our minds."* S9 draws attention to the fact that he learned how to solve problems and that he did not see himself as different from adults. S15 explained that with the project he learned how to be an active citizen, to solve social problems and is willing to solve them with the following words: *"I'm learning what it would be like to be an active citizen. I learn what I can do about the country with other citizens, I would like to find solutions to different problems of society."* With a similar statement, S10 stated that she saw herself as an active citizen and said, *"I started to think that people like us (children) can help people who need help and to whom the state does not give a response. I feel that I am a more active citizen, I see myself as a more responsible person."* S6 expressed her contribution to citizenship as learning to be useful to humanity and society and said: *"In the shelter the animals are not given good food, they are not cared for much because there are too many animals. We have taken better care of living creatures; we have learned to be useful to humanity and society."* S15 said that he approached the problems from a different perspective using following words: *"I think there is this problem with animals, that they take the animals and check them, they vaccinate them, then they leave them on the street where they took them. Thus, they make the life of animals more difficult, not easier. For example, a home can be found for them. I think I can look at social problems from a different perspective".*

Social studies teacher T1 thinks that students become aware of social problems as citizens and try to find solutions with a sense of social responsibility thanks to SL projects. She expressed her opinion with these words:

> "You know that our students are in a better socio-economic situation. women or children who need help do not exist around students, but that does not mean they do not exist at all, so they learned to be sensitive and interested in not only the side they see, but also the side they do not see. It is important that they are aware of those around them, have a high awareness, are sensitive and put this into action. These are the most important qualities that a citizen should have. The sense of responsibility that followed immediately turned into "What could I do" in our children, and they took a job from the beginning to the end and acted with a great sense of responsibility. From now on, I think that, maybe not all but most of the children will show sensitivity to these issues throughout their lives. It was not just awareness, they also thought that there was something they could do after this awareness. They can do something at any moment, they can organize an organization, they can raise the whole school, one person can be anything, they saw it."

T2 too stated that with the project, the students realized that an insignificant situation for themselves is important for another living creature.

> "The day the children went to the animal shelter, the food was collected. It was them who collected it and took it there. That day, the child saw this: When I collect the leftovers from the food I ate at school and take it there, there is a living creature that is hungry and will benefit from it. A food leftover that is insignificant for me is an important thing for another creature, and the children worked hard for it in the cafeteria that day. I think even that perception is very important, most of these children spend their holidays in 5-star hotels. Therefore, they are in a culture of consumption, and they saw where the food leftover on their plate would be of use."

From the views of both the students and the teachers, the contribution of SL approach to students as citizens is to be aware of social problems, to acquire knowledge related to these problems, to feel responsible, to try to find solutions, to be an active citizen, to increase their interest in social problems, to look at problems from a different perspective and to learn to be useful to society.

DISCUSSION

In the research, it was seen that the use of SL approach in the social studies course contributed to the academic, personal, social and citizenship development of the students. It has been revealed that the contribution to their academic development is learning new information, experiencing an SL project for the first time, learning to conduct scientific research, and an increase in motivation for lessons. Accordingly, it can be said that SL approach has a positive contribution to the academic development of the students. This result obtained from the study is similar to the result of Bowman et al.'s (2010) and Moely et al.'s (2002) research that SL experience has a positive effect on students' learning. In addition, Scales et al.'s (2000) study shows parallelism with the conclusion that SL positively affects students' academic motivation. The studies conducted by Scales et al. (2006), which showed that students are more successful academically, and Newman et al. (2015), which additionally showed that the students' academic participation increased, differ in that they are related to another aspect of academic development. However, they are similar in terms of making a positive contribution to students' academic development.

There are also studies in the literature showing that SL approach does not contribute to the academic development of students. For example, in the study of Poon et al. (2011) there was no significant difference in the learning outcomes of the students after SL experience. Similarly, Pepin (2013) revealed that SL projects had no effect on the academic achievement of the students. The difference between the results of this study and the aforementioned studies may be related to the duration and intensity of

the students' SL experiences. That is to say, in this study, the students participated in SL projects for a 16-week period, while they participated for four weeks in the research of Poon et al. (2011) and for nine weeks in the research of Pepin (2013).

This research revealed furthermore that the contribution of SL approach to the personal development of students is being happy because the project is beneficial, discovering different lives, empathizing, increasing self-confidence, developing a sense of equity, being creative, being respectful to people and entrepreneurship. The result of "being happy because it is beneficial" is similar to the result of Eppler et al.'s (2011) research that the students who participated in SL studies felt better. Similarly, the result that students' empathy skills improved is in line with the results of the research of Emerson (2007), Ramia (2005), Ryan (2017), Ryan and Ryan (2012), and Scott and Graham (2015). In addition, the result of this study that SL provides an increase in students' self-confidence is in line with the results of the studies of Grassi et al. (2004) and Jones et al. (2010).

The study revealed that the contribution of SL approach to the social development of the students is the development of cooperation and communication skills, the awakening of the desire to be a leader and the understanding of the equality of people. The students had to introduce their SL projects and communicate with the people and institutions they would work with. It is understood that this helps students to develop cooperation and communication skills. This result of the research is similar to the results of the research conducted by Moely et al. (2002), and Tan and Soo (2020). The results of this research that students' leadership skills improve are further in line with the results of the research conducted by Nabors et al. (2019) and the one conducted by Richards et al. (2013). However, there is no similarity between the results of this study and the result of Buch and Harden's (2011) study that after SL experience the students' negative judgements about other people disappeared, and the result of Ryan and Ryan's (2012) study, that the students' prejudices decreased. This can be explained by the fact that the projects carried out by the students, their experiences and the people and groups they interacted with different.

Lastly, the research revealed that the contribution of SL approach to the development of students as citizens is related to realizing social problems, becoming aware of them, feeling responsible, trying to find solutions, being an active citizen, increasing interest in social problems, looking at problems from a different perspective and learning to be useful to society. The results of the research show smilarities to the results of various other studies. Lee et al.'s (2007) research shows that SL projects raises awareness about citizenship-related issues. Prentice's (2007) research reveals that SL projects support the development of citizenship participation. From Scott and Graham's (2015) research it can be seen that SL projects lead to positive change in community participation. In Ryan's (2017) research the result was the increase in the sense of social responsibility. The results of Afzal and Hussain's (2020), Buch and Harden's (2011), Tan and Soo's (2020), and Yorio and Ye's (2012) studies are recognizing and understanding problems of the society. In Adarlo's (2020) research reveals that SL experiences made students realize that they can be agents of change and contribute to society even in simple ways.

Considering the results of the research, it is obvious that the use of SL approach in the social studies course contributes to the academic, personal, social and citizenship development of the students in various ways. In particular, both students and teachers had the opportunity to carry out an SL project for the first time. It is thought that the experience of SL has an important role in citizenship education in terms of providing opportunities for students to become active citizens. Active citizenship is a concept that emphasizes awareness of social problems and taking action to help solve them, apart from knowing one's rights, paying taxes, voting and obeying the rules. Thanks to SL, active citizens with social participation skills can be raised. In addition, the use of this approach in social studies courses can help students get to know the society they belong to and strengthen their ties.

In this study, SL approach was applied to 6th grade students. New research can be carried out with students at different grade levels for the social studies course. In addition, research can be carried out in which SL approach can be applied with primary, secondary and high school students in different courses. Teachers can be encouraged to recognize this approach and use it in their lessons by including SL approach in the social studies curriculum.

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