Reflections of "Use of Comics in Social Studies Education" Course: The Opinion and Experiences of Teachers

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Cover Page Footnote

Dear Editor, This study is the examination of the use of comics in education course, which was opened by me for the first time in Turkey, according to the opinions of teachers. Sincerely yours

Introduction

This social transformation has increased human interaction and transformed the world into a global village, in the words of Marshall McLuhan (Celik Varol & Varol, 2019). This interaction has affected all aspects of society, including the education sector. It is expected that the teacher, who is one of the most important members of the education community, will be a part of this change and possess numerous advanced abilities. A qualified teacher is defined as the one accessing information, using information at the right time and place, critical thinking, being solution-oriented, interpreting information, mastering the use of Web 2.0 tools, following and applying new developments in education, producing age and need appropriate materials, having knowledge of the field and field developments, and serving as a role model for students (Tutkun & Aksoyalp, 2010; Blau, Pesed & Nusan, 2014; Gudmundsdottir & Hatlevik, 2018; Utkugün, 2021). Teachers should be equipped with age-appropriate and contemporary tools (materials) while performing their profession (Meydan, 2018; McGarr & McDonagh, 2021). An important objective of the teacher education is that each teacher will develop and use materials appropriate for his or her own field, as well as designing engaging, unique, and high-quality materials. The tools (materials) that have grown in importance and number in the educational environment can be selected from those already available or created by the teachers themselves. One of the characteristics that make teachers valuable is their ability to create materials and develop original products suited to their own course-subject goals. A material that is effective makes teaching permanent, makes learning enjoyable, and boosts motivation. In this way, students contribute positively to permanent learning and academic success by reconstructing the knowledge that they have acquired. However, a qualified teacher education allows for the creation and application of original, needs-based materials (Demiralp, 2007).

The materials may pertain to a single branch or to multiple fields. One of these materials is the long-standing use of comic books in education. Comics are an original and one-of-a-kind art form that emerged from the combination of visual art and fiction writing (Eisner 1985). In addition, McCloud (1993) defined comics as a sequential art whose purpose is to convey a message to the reader. McCloud (2000) asserts that comic books facilitate the transfer of events in the real world from a unique perspective, indicating that it encourages original and creative thinking. Comics can be published and used as educational materials, or they can be designed and produced manually or digitally based on the subject, achievement, and requirements. In addition, unlike traditional materials, comics are deemed suitable for use by students and teachers as an innovative teaching tool (Ayers & Alexander-Tanner, 2010). Comic books are an effective tool for teaching difficult, abstract, and complex subjects. Social studies is one of the most prevalent areas

where difficult-to-teach subjects are numereous due to the fact that social studies integrates numerous social and human sciences and aims to develop citizenship skills (NCSS). While Edgar B. Wesley defines this field as a simplified form that combines pedagogy and social sciences (Hertzberg, 1981, p.12), Oztürk (2006) asserts that it raises active citizens who can apply their knowledge and solve problems in tandem with the change and development of the age, identifies it as a training programme for individuals. According to Doğanay (2004), he has a significant role in the socialisation and socialisation of the individual. With these brief definitions, one can conclude that social studies has a crucial role in the formation of the individual and that its intense and diverse structure makes it difficult to teach. Teachers in this field should also be open to innovation, capable of self-improvement, technologically savvy, and able to utilise and create diverse materials. At this point, the study's objective becomes apparent. The study was conducted to reveal the reflections of social studies teachers who took the master's-level course titled "The Use of Comics in Social Studies Education." In the method section, detailed information about this course will be provided. What are the opinions and reflections of 2019-2022 social studies teachers who took a postgraduate course on the design and implementation of comics as educational material in the classroom? We looked for solutions to the problem. The significance of this study lies in the teachers' evaluation of this unique course, which was introduced for the first time in Turkey and continues to run.

Methodology
Research Design

The research employed phenomenological methodology, one of the qualitative study designs. Phenomonology, which provides the opportunity to examine the perspectives of individuals in relation to events and phenomena, is an effective method for revealing the individual's views and thoughts objectively. (Lune&Berg 2017; Creswell, 2018, p. 77). Phenomenological "seek to discover naturally occurring population meanings among study populations' members" (Lune & Berg 2017, p. 3). This study aims to comprehend the phenomenon of comics use in education among graduate students at Yildiz Technical University.

Participants

Participants in the study were selected using purposive sampling. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is a common sampling technique that yields a more accurate answer to the research question (Patton, 2002). In contrast, criterion sampling involves selecting participants based on a particular criterion or characteristic (Patton, 2002, p. 238). This study's participants were selected based

on their participation in the "Use of Comics in Social Studies Education" elective course offered as part of the Social Studies Education Master's programme and teaching at Yildiz Technical University. It is sufficient for teachers to be included in the study group if they have taken the course beginning with the fall semester of 2019, when it goes into effect, or any semester thereafter. The research study group consisted of 12 social studies teachers who met the above criteria. 5 of the participants were employed by private schools, while 7 were employed by public schools. There were 9 female teachers and 3 male teachers, and each had at least two years of professional experience.

Data Collection Tools

A semi-structured interview form was used to collect data for the study. Semi-structured interviews consist of formerly prepared open-ended questions, which enables the researcher to ask detailed questions and facilitate the event for a more thorough analysis of the situation or event. In brief responses, the researcher can pose questions and obtain participant information (Mathers et al., 1998). In addition, it allows the participants to express their emotions clearly while responding to the questions, allowing the ideas to be objectively revealed (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 68). The study's semi-structured interview form development process began with the acquisition of the necessary information through a review of the relevant literature. Then, in accordance with the research's objective, a pool of questions and draught forms were developed. At the draught stage, two academicians, a comic book artist, and three social studies teachers were consulted in order to create the final form. Then, a pilot study was conducted with two teachers of social studies who met the criteria for the study group. Following these steps, the form was reduced to 14 questions.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used in the analysis of the data in the research. Content analysis allows for more in-depth research. Content analysis makes the study more clear and understandable by classifying it within the framework of themes and concepts (Lune & Berg, 2017, 181; Kvale, 2007, 105). In this way of analysis, importance is given to the relation between theme and concept in terms of presenting the research results clearly. At the end of the interviews, the transcript of the interview records was the first step followed. The interviews, which were transcribed into text, were analyzed using the content analysis method. As a result of the analyzes, the data obtained through content analysis were interpreted in accordance with the tables created. In order to express the findings more clearly and clearly, codes were created in parallel with the tables prepared (Lune & Berg,

2017, 181-184; Kvale, 2007, 105, 106). The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. The data obtained were analyzed with themes and coding, and the results were presented by discussing in the context of the research question.

Emergence of the Study and Structure of Course

During her graduate studies at Yildiz Technical University in Turkey, one of the researchers decided to enrol in a different course, "Use of Comics in Social Studies Education", for teacher training and teacher education, which led to the conception of the study. Using comics in education seemed different and it captured the close attention of the researcher. At the conclusion of the course, she decided to transform the benefit that had emerged by bringing an important art to educational environments, bringing a different perspective to education, developing digital skills, developing the power of writing and storytelling, and transforming it into a product by the end of the semester. The reason was numerous positive effects of the course on her professional life. She brought the topic to her advisor, the instructor of the course, and they started to cooperate. They began this research to share the experiences of other teachers taking the course and to inform the appropriate parties of its existence.

Dr. Genc Osman Ilhan designed the "Use of Comics in Social Studies Education" course, and taught it for the first time during the 2019-2020 academic year's fall semester. During the development of the course's concept, the instructor was inspired from his doctoral dissertation research on the use of comics in social studies education. This was the first course in Turkey to design comics as a resource for education in general and social studies education specifically. Each student would have their own educational comics by the end of the course. Students were able to create these comics by either drawing them by hand or creating them digitally. This way, the course participants' manual and digital skills were expected to developed according to their own desires. The course differs from most others in that both theory and practise were presented. Participating actively in the process affords students the opportunity to both learn and create. The instructor wants those who enrol in the course to create educational comic book content, either digitally or manually, and share it with their classmates at the end of the semester. Thus, the product of each individual who completes the course emerges, i.e., their own comic book material that they created. During the presentations, the discussions and exchange of ideas generate a great deal of wealth and various perspectives emerge. Additionally, it is ensured that people learn a new art form and incorporate it into their education, with rubrics and inquirey-based learnning (Degand, 2022). In light of this integration, it can be said that they have developed a distinct perspective and a dominant position in both education and their respective fields. At the end of the semester, it was observed that the course was instructive, active, and product-based,

as well as entertaining and enjoyable. In addition, the coordinator did not administer exams when grading the students' work; rather, he evaluated the process and the comics presented.

Table 1.Weekly Progress in Comics in Education Course

The Use of Comics in Social Studies Education	
Week 1	In the first week, the syllabus prepared by the director was distributed to the students. The rules of the course, the topics, issues, resources were given based on the exchange of views with the students. In the same week, subjects such as why the students chose the course and their expectations from the course were taken both in writing and verbally. A brief introduction to the lesson was made and some topics were mentioned: *What is a comic book? Preliminary information about the comics was given, and different sources, especially many comics, were brought to the class and shared with the students.* The coordinator asked each student to read 2 comics for the next week and to send them by interpreting them according to the criteria presented on an online platform 2 days before the lesson.
Week 2	The second week started with the discussion of the comics, which the students read as the first week's work and examined according to the criteria determined by the coordinator. With both educational and artistic studies, the level of consciousness of those who were not familiar with comics was increased. Thus, a large pool of comics and awareness were being created. The coordinator gave academic reading texts related to the lesson to be taught next week and determined a return date via the online system. Also, the coordinator opened Pixton classroom and shared the code with the students. Students were expected to design their avatars fort he next week.
Week 3	While giving theoretical information on the development and history of comics in the Executive World and Turkey, the articles on the subject he gave the previous week were discussed. He gave both domestic and foreign videos about comics for the other week and asked for a response from students.
Week 4	The acceptance of the art of comics in the world and the art of comics were discussed. In addition to this, the aesthetic power of comics was also mentioned. From this point of view, the way of comic book became a way of art was evaluated.

	Video and article review work was given for the next week and a return was requested.
Week 5	Comics in education and history of comics was introduced. Readings were given for the next week.
Week 6	In education, both domestic and foreign academic studies related to comics were examined and discussions were made. Task for video watching and interpretation was given for the next week.
Week 7	The components of the art of comics were discussed from a technical point of view. Topics such as what kind of details it had, the use of squares and balloons were taught. The lesson was concluded by mentioning the scenario part. For the lesson to be held next week, the coordinator asked the students for scenario ideas, and they were told to give a brief justification and to return online by explaining.
Week 8	The students explained the scenarios they thought one by one, and the instructor and the class discussed them together. A suitable environment was created for the emergence of new ideas and new scenarios. Students were asked to work on the scenario for one more week and focus on its educational aspect.
Week 9	In order to make the comic book scenarios prepared in the first part of the lesson suitable, the evaluations and discussions by the course participants and the coordinator continued this week. In the second part of the course, the Pixton Web 2.0 tool was introduced, how to use it, and drawing techniques were shown. The aim here was that no matter how good the scenario is, it can be realistic to the extent that it can be drawn. Because although Pixton is the best comic book authoring tool in the world, it is limited to hand drawing. In order for the students to see this and shape their scenarios accordingly, the coordinator asked each student to include them in the Pixton class and work. The process was more flexible for those who want to draw by hand. But they are very few in number. The coordinator asked them to explore and familiarize themselves with the related Web 2.0 tool for the next week, and stated that drawing lessons would continue.
Week 10	The students, who examined the Web 2.0 tool and saw its limitations, decided to update their scenarios. At the same time, they received support from the lecturer about the details of the tool. The lesson on how to use Pixton tool too long. It was requested by the coordinator to reach a certain frame of the

	comic in the digital environment by next week.
Week 11	Before the presentations, the students continued to work by sharing their difficulties, troubles and successes with the coordinator. In addition, the comics previously produced from Pixton were shown to the students and their details were explained.
Week 12	Presentations for the upcoming two two weeks started. Each student or groups of two, if any, made their presentations in the class in turn and introduced their comics. The instructor and classmates expressed their opinions and evaluations, and the instructor asked for updates where necessary.
Week 13	Presentations continued, and the comics produced were discussed as in the previous week.
Week 14	In the last lesson of the term, a general evaluation of the 14 weeks was made. Produced comics were evaluated for the last time. Both verbal and written feedback were received from the students. The term ended.

Findings and Discussion

In this part of the study, a comprehensive analysis of the "Use of Comics in Social Studies Education" course, the contributions of the teachers who took the course to their professional lives, the findings about the course process, and the content and results of other studies in the field are included.

Participants reported that they were unaware of this course prior to experiencing the course process. Especially the teachers who took the course for the first time in the Fall of 2019, when it was offered for the first time (the majority of participants), had no prior experience with comics in education. The participants outlined that they took the course for reasons such as completing credits, getting to know the instructor, or having faith in him. However, upon beginning the process, they realised the course was different that others. There were numerous causes for this distinction. The majority of the participants were introduced to the art of comics for the first time, were impressed, and recognised its educational value. In addition, they saw the platforms where this art can be created in the digital environment and are exposed to Web 2.0 applications. In this regard, they viewed the course as a time appropriate process in which digital skills are developed. In addition, the fact that students would publish their own educational comic book material at the end of the semester was one of the distinguishing characteristics of the course. One participant remarked that "the course was different than the theoretical lessons we

typically have" (P1M) and drew attention to the fact that the content of this lesson differed from that of other lessons in that it is based on practise and product.

As a result of the interviews, the codes derived about the expectations from the lesson are as follows: *those who expect it to be a theoretical course, those who expect it to be a fun course, those who expect a lesson on getting to know the comics, and those who cannot expect a course and choose the course to complete credits and are neutral toward the course*. Prior to the lesson, participants' anticipations for the lesson varied. Almost all of the teachers participating in this study had no prior experience on comics in education, partly because the course was first offered then. Both the course instructor and the group of students had an experience of a first. When asked about their expectations before the lesson, P9F responded, *"I didn't have any expectations because I had no prior knowledge or understanding of the subject"*. Then, another participant's perspective was P5F who stated, *"Before I took the comics class, I only saw it as a genre where stories could be entertaining and suitable for children"*. Due to the nature of the comic, P11F stated her *"expectation that the lesson will be entertaining rather than boring"*. As there were participants who expected the course to be entertaining due to comics, there were the ones who took the course because they knew the instructor before. In addition, it was clear a theoretical process was expected (P5F *"I initially anticipated a highly theoretical course"*).

The following codes were generated in the analysis of participant opinions after the lesson were: *the notion that it is a practical course, the history of comics, the fact that it is a fun technique, the acquisition of digital skills, the creation of educational materials, the publication of scholarly works, and the acquaintance with comic book artists.* The participant social studies teachers stated that the process exceeded their initial expectations. For instance, P2M stated *"I can confidently say that it exceeded my expectations. In other words, we created articles and cartoons"* and continued *"This course has taught me all the techniques in the design process and all the tools we can prepare, namely web 2 tools, and I can say that it has exceeded my expectations because it also gave me the chance to use it"*. The participant stated that the comics course gave him the opportunity to design comics, write scripts, and learn and apply web technologies related to the subject, a similar result is seen in studies in which technology-based courses are advised to be not merely theoretical (Çelik, 2020; Öksüz et al. 2009). P4M outlined *"Upon learning that we would be designing comics using the Pixton application, I was so pleased and enthusiastic that I meticulously prepared my comic book material. Consequently, I am able to state that the first lesson exceeded my expectations"*. He revealed that the course exceeded his expectations and that designing his own material using web applications in the field motivates course participants. The course was seen favorable as it contrasted the expectation of a classical, theoretical understanding with an application-focused process.

The perspectives of the participants on comics reading and comics are also addressed. Before the lesson, the participants' perspectives on the comics were solicited, and their responses were analysed. The majority of participants had incorrect or insufficient knowledge of the art of comics, with the exception of three individuals who had knowledge of comics prior to the lesson. In light of the data, the participants who were familiar with comics and had a reading habit prior to the lesson were assigned the following codes: "humour and comedy, fantasy, science fiction, adventure". P1M, who was introduced to comic books as a child, says, *"I learned to read and write from the first books I read prior to enrolling in this course".* The first comics I read were simple books with lots of pictures and little text, and I enjoyed them. I appreciated how his sense of humour made me laugh and think. Another participant, P4F, stated, *"I've always been interested in DC heroes. I am currently reading their comics. As you know, DC heroes include Batman, Superman, and Wonder Woman Flash".* Participants who knew and enjoyed comics stated that they first encountered and appreciated them as children. P7F uttered: *"Actually, my first acquaintance with my father and the comics he brought us was through Comic Novels. I will never forget what happened to Asterix and Obélix. That's why it sounded so exciting to me as a child,"* establishing a connection between comic books and his childhood. The few participants who were introduced to comics by their families and began reading them viewed this art form as a fun and enjoyable book to read. It is assumed that prior to taking the course, these participants did not consider the educational value of comics and only viewed them as a form of enjoyable reading. This is also evident in some studies conducted in the United States, where the popularity of comics has steadily increased since the turn of the 20th century (McCarty and Smith, 1943; Sones, 1944; Carr, 1958). In these three studies, the entertaining aspect of comic books is discussed. According to the studies, this aspect of the comic has an effect on the readers. Even though a significant amount of time has passed since these studies, this aspect of the comic has not changed. This study is comparable to those conducted in the 20th century. Three participants said that they could not read the comics as much as they used to, and that they were excited and happy to have it come back into their lives with this course. The participants who who were familiar with the comic book mentioned that it brings fun, humor, adventure, the importance of visuals and reading habits. It can be said that participant teachers used comics for reading habits before they took the lesson. While P4F was mentioning *"I actually read comics in order to gain a reading habit or to develop a foreign language, as I do at this time"*, we see that he utilised educational aspect of comics before the lesson. Also as Tekin and Ilhan (2021) state that comics is interesting and entertaining, has visuality and allows for concretization reveals that it is a very suitable tool for language teaching. In 1944, Sones discussed the same situation for the first time in his article, considering comics as an educational material. This study became a milestone with the

educational aspect of comics (Sones, 1944). Sones, by emphasizing the unnoticed educational aspect of the comic, reached a result similar to the one in this study. In other words, comics readers experience an educational process without realizing it.

While participants familiar to comics were easy to talk, it has been observed that those who have not read or met comics before avoid commenting. The opinions of the participants, who had the opportunity to get to know the comic through the use of comics course in the social studies education taken during their graduate education, are as follows: P2M stated that he viewed comics in a positive way with his words: *"I always had a positive opinion before I took the comic book course"*. However, a significant number of the participants did not know the difference between comics and cartoons before taking the course, and that they learned that these two are separate branches of art, as P3M stated in his words: *"It was thanks to the lesson that I took, comics in the social studies education. I realized that the comics is a different art"* It has been observed that most of the teachers used the words 'comics' and 'cartoons' interchangeably before the lesson and even said that they generally call this type of art caricature. The reason for this situation may be that the caricature is more known in the society, is more common and is the pioneer of the drawing arts.

There were also changes in the participants' comic book reading habits after taking the course. It was observed that only three teachers read comic books prior to the lesson, but it was understood that all participants engaged in this activity following the lesson. P5F said: *"What did it contribute to me as a person? It was beneficial for me to form the habit of reading. Then he told me there was a comic book and introduced me to a new genre"*. In addition, P11F mentioned her first experience of reading comics as *"Certainly, it was a book about Atatürk given to me by a special friend, and I read it,.... Currently, I am primarily reading the American school Marvel series. I personally purchased it from the Marvel Series and reviewed it. I studied for this master's degree and for a business degree. In other words, it leads us to new worlds and expands our horizons."* As a result of the lesson, she developed the habit of reading comic books, as can be deduced. It is a remarkable situation in terms of the rapid spread of comic books and their widespread consumption. In fact, this situation is comparable to the findings of some studies on the immense popularity of comic books in American society and the analysis of its reading by all demographic groups (Witty, 1941; Martson, 1943). In both studies, it was emphasised that comic books are well-liked and quickly read. They reported that after the lesson, these teachers became aware of comics and spent time in the comics sections of libraries and bookstores. During these visits, they followed the publications and searched for comics that could be incorporated into education. Similarly, the 1941 study by Witty reveals similarities. According to Witty's research, comics are a popular genre in all segments of society because

they are easy to read, fluent, readable in short amounts of time, and easily accessible. (Witty, 1941; Carr, 1958).

Regarding the teachers' use of materials in education and the factors considered in the use of materials, they expressed numerous opinions. The codes created in light of participant opinions on the issues considered in the selection of materials in education and social studies instruction are *accessibility, suitable for socioeconomic situation, sufficient number, non-distracting material, sufficient number, suitable for the subject, appealing to the student, attracting attention, motivating and arousing curiosity*. P11F uttered "*First and foremost, the materials must be appropriate for the number of students in the class. Because we must be able to manage both time and students, as well as comprehend and explain the situation in the surrounding environment. There are also discipline issues because it is too distracting. The material should be followed up in a way that the instructor can use or direct. It should be pertinent to the topic, age- and class-appropriate, and not tedious*". According to the response of the participant who works in a public school, it can be concluded that she prefers to select materials that are adaptable to each class size. In addition, we observe that materials that do not disrupt classroom discipline, do not interfere with the teacher's authority, and can be adapted to the subject are sought as a prerequisite during the selection process. P2M outlined his ideas as "*I favour using visual, or concrete, materials. The materials with which a child can interact one-on-one are significantly more important for making learning permanent*". The type of materials participants preferred were smart boards, projections, virtual museums, Web 2.0 environments, educational sites, comics, literary texts, intelligence games, audio materials, photographs, pictures, tables, maps, objects, and spheres are the preferred types of materials. While P1M mentioned his ideas as "*The majority of the maps I use are... Alternatively, we can create comics with our students about learning outcomes*", it is observed that the participant uses the prepared comic book materials prepared accordingly to the lesson objectives. Another participant (P8F) who prefers visual materials stated "*I prefer visual and audio materials over written materials. Aside from that, I prefer printed visual materials that I can give to students and that they can view directly*". Due to the importance of abstract concepts in social studies education, we observe that the participants prefer visual materials. While visual aids such as maps, globes, smart boards, and overhead projectors are the first to come to mind, there are also claims that they employ drama, literary genres, and mind and intelligence games. Similar to this study, comics have been found supporting education in the studies of Rose (2022), Brugar & Roberts (2017); Önal, et al. (2017) and Ünlü (2016).

In the study, the positive opinions of the participants regarding the comics as a medium were that 'it embodies abstract issues, contributes to individual differences in teaching, instils reading habits, makes learning enjoyable, promotes long-term retention, and increases student motivation' while negative codes

included 'only as a form of entertainment, high cost, reluctance to read anything other than comic books, and lack of class time'. Numerous participants held the opinion that comic book material contributes to permanent learning, embodies abstract subjects, increases motivation towards the lesson, contributes to creative thought, and enables learning through play. P5F of respondents uttered: *"The positive aspects of using comics in social studies education to motivate students are also interesting. It develops their imaginations, enables them to come up with creative ideas, and encourages them to view events from a variety of angles. In addition, it teaches them how to incorporate the information they've learned and visuals to support their writing".* Golding and Verrier (2020) has also found that comics and visuals positively affect students' understanding and attitudes. Participants viewed comics as being entertaining and ejoyable to read, and the classroom atmosphere was fun and enjoyable. Participants seemed relaxed and happy in the classes. This situation indicates that the comics as educational materials utilised in the course positively affect on the classroom environment. Similar to the thesis research conducted in Kaba, it was found that comic book content positively affects the classroom environment (2021). The use of comic book materials in the course is viewed as an important factor in increasing students' interest and motivation. Another participant, P1M, echoes this sentiment, stating that it is important *"to reinforce the positive aspects quickly, to give abstract subjects quickly, to embody them, to increase their permanence, and to have the opportunity to personally experience them...".* Similarly, there are studies in the literature demonstrating that comic book material is effective at communicating difficult-to-explain abstract concepts. In Hutchinson (1949)'s study, teachers used comics to ease the learning of difficult topics. The 'making-easy' effect of comics is referred also in Chilcoat (1993), Bolton-Gray (2012); İlhan, Kaba and Şin (2021)'s studies. As a result of the comic book study, it was determined that comics had a positive impact on students' perceptions of democracy. In addition, Ilhan and Oruc (2019) demonstrate the positive effects of comic book material in communicating abstract concepts. P9F stated *"I can tell the positive sides like, it fosters creativity in the child*". K.2 expresses his opinion that it is a remarkable material by stating, *"Therefore, it has many advantages. Because visual learning is so frequently supported, this content is immediately engaging. I believe it will attract a large number of students because it expresses the emotional transitions of a very intense mood using sound effects".* We can see that he focused on attention-getting aspect at first glance. Other studies have concluded that educational comics are effective in increasing student motivation for the lesson by removing the lesson from being ordinary and boring. For instance the studies of Şentürk (2022); Araya (2020); Hosler and Boomer (2011) signal that comics increases motivation by making teaching more effective. Also, Zimmerman (2008) mentions comics are effective in gaining reading habits by providing reading motivation because it is a

fun type to read. In addition, Hutchinson (1949) provides positive motivation towards the lesson, and Ishikura (2013) provides positive motivation towards the lesson. In similar to the current study, previous research demonstrates that the use of comics in the classroom increases student motivation.

As for the participants' negative views on comics as a educational materials, P1M stated, *"It's a waste of time; the social studies course has very few class hours"*. Another participant, P7M, uttered *"If I say the negative aspects, I can think of the negative side because, as I've observed in some children's classes, it does not go beyond being a means of enjoyment. Perhaps this is such a negative characteristic in some"*. Also, P3M mentioned *"It is important that the comics are appropriate for the child's reading level, or that the illustrations appeal to the child"* while P12F said *"The negative aspects are the only thing that comes to mind for me. It must find a compromise position. Additionally, the school must provide financial resources"*. Participants who expressed their negative views noted that they may have negative attitudes toward literary works other than comic books and emphasised the significance of financial opportunities. In general, participants took a considerable amount of time when asked about negative opinions and had difficulty identifying a negative aspect of themselves. Participants who viewed the shortness of the lesson time for comics also mentioned the limitedness of social studies lesson hours for any material. Regarding the use of comics in the classroom, participants working in both public and private schools uttered similar statements. It has been stated that as fact that comics are an entertaining literary genre prevents students from viewing it as educational. According to practitioner teachers, comics impacts classroom discipline negatively. The reason for this is that the students have never encountered such an art in the classroom, so they misjudge and see it for an extracurricular activity. In addition, the duration of the lesson was deemed inadequate for the use of comics. According to the participants, the use of comics in the classroom should be well-planned. Çiçek Şentürk's (2020) doctoral dissertation where argumentation-supported educational comics is used for students' interest in the environment, motivation, and academic success, is one of the studies that parallels the negative effect on classroom management resulting from the time limitation in the use of comics in education and the fact that it is an entertaining genre.

In the study, teachers who took the course on the use of comics in social studies instruction were asked about the course's impact on their professional and personal lives. In this context, the codes created based on the results obtained for their contribution to their professional life were 'publishing academic articles, increasing the difficulty of expression, preparing a comic book lesson plan, providing digital competence, increasing the ability to create materials, increasing professional motivation, increasing course dominance, and providing script writing skills, and improvement in communication with students'. The codes for their

contribution to individual life were 'providing empathy, increasing motivation, increasing awareness of comics culture, increasing the ability to express oneself, blogging, developing the habit of reading comics, and contributing to creativity'. Regarding the impact of the use of comic books in social studies education on their personal and professional lives, P1M says, *"First and foremost, if I must speak for myself, I believe it has increased my capacity for empathy. I was attempting to comprehend life through the perspective of my students"*. According to him, this course assists teachers in comprehending and empathising with their students. Another participant, P2M emphasised the importance of empathy skills for students as *"...For instance, they can identify with and empathise with certain characters. I believed that they could be taught in this manner. Social studies lends itself well to this, so I would like to see comics used in social studies education"*. He argues that social studies should be supported due to the course's verbal focus and the need for empathic teaching skills. The reasons for teachers to use comic book material in the transfer of subjects such as citizenship and history where abstract concepts predominate can be enumerated as follows: It facilitates empathy and affords an opportunity by combining visuals and text. Considering the significance of empathy skills in comprehending abstract issues of history and citizenship, the studies investigating students' academic success, motivation and attitudes towards the course, experiences, and the impact it has on teaching are Damopolili, Lumembang, İlhan (2021)'s, Şentürk, Şimşek (2021)'s, Letizia (2021)'s, Saribiyik (2018)'s, Ilhan (2016)'s and Joffe (2008)'. Graphic literature supports learning and teaching history (Barbre, Carroll & Tolbert, 2022). They all implied the positive effect of comics on students' academic success, motivation and attitudes towards social studies course.

As a professional gain, P2M uttered *"...after the lesson, our teacher and I published an article together; it was a great help to me and made a significant professional contribution to the field. How do I personally and independently design a comic in this process? What are the design phases and what should be taken into account? Once, it allowed me to master the literature of comic books"*. While stating that he had the opportunity to become more familiar with comics on an individual level, he states that this course taught him how to adapt this genre as a teaching material, how to design and use it in accordance with the subject and outcome. After completing the course, he contributed to his professional life by writing publications and articles. In addition, another participants stated that she increased her digital competence in designing materials by learning the applications that allowed him to design comic book material in the digital environment with the words: *"It piqued my interest so much that I devoted considerable effort to preparing the comic"* (P4F). As a result of the lesson, the participants have utilised the digital environment when preparing comic book content. In general, we observed that the participants made extensive use of the Pixton throughout the

course. Due to the digital environment's user-friendliness, participants were able to create their own original comic book materials with relative ease while designing comics.

As a course output, it is evident that the participants, who reported enjoying the course repeatedly, agreed to incorporate new material into their professional lives. In this context, one of the course participants, P4F outlined *"producing a comic book and then writing it up as an article and creating the first article in this field was the most significant outcome for me"*. They stated that they made progress starting with comics material and continuing with the article. Thus, it can be seen that the course's digital comic book output was transformed into an article and contributed to the academic field. In their post-lesson reflections, social studies teachers noted an improvement in their digital skills as a result of using the Pixton Web 2.0 tool to create comics, as compared to their pre-lesson perspectives. Similar results were discovered in a study conducted with social studies teacher candidates using Pixton; the participants' digital skills improved (Kiriş Avarogullari & Mutlu, 2019). This situation suggests that the Pixton Web 2.0 tool contributes positively to the digital skills of its users. It is stated that teachers' professional motivation increased after incorporating comic book material into their social studies classes. Digital materials that are age-appropriate and thus provide the opportunity to get to know the current generation intimately are viewed as a situation that increases the dominance of teachers in the field. Participating teachers mentioned the products of the course as the comics they created as educational materials, as well as the thesis (Keskin, 2022; Kaba, 2021) and academic studies (Kaba, Şin, and Ilhan, 2020; lhan, Kaba, and Şin, 2021; Keskin, and Ilhan, 2021; Ak, Erdoğan, and Ilhan, 2020; Çelik, and Ilhan, 2020; Secmez, and Ilhan, 2021; Kavak and Ilhan, 2021; Ozdemir, İlhan and Oruc, 2022).

The aim of this study was to understand the reflections/effects of "Use of Comics in Social Studies Education" course, which was reopened for education and social studies education, on the participants (social studies teachers) taking the course. It has been determined that the course had educational, professional, and artistic effects on teachers. While the teachers gained a new perspective on their respective fields, they were also exposed to a new art form. Teachers who claimed to have benefited from the lesson stated that their professional qualities were bolstered by the innovations they could implement with their students in the classroom.

Recommendations

• Similar courses can be offered at undergraduate and graduate levels in different universities.

• Comic book materials that are accepted as pedagogically appropriate for the subject and achievements can be developed by experts.

• Trainings on the use of comics in education can be given in order to support the professional development processes of teachers.

• The number of trainings that will support teachers' digital skills in designing and using materials suitable for the younger generations can be increased.

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