



# **An Evaluation of the Literacy Skills Included within the Social Studies Curriculum**

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## **Abstract**

The changing conditions in the world with the developments in science and technology have made it compulsory for individuals to have the knowledge and skills required by the age in order to adapt to the society in which they live as well as the global civilization. In this respect, countries organize their education policies in accordance with the aim of raising effective individuals who have the skills, knowledge and equipment to adapt to the changing and developing world. The concept of literacy is the acquisition of the knowledge and skills that individuals need to have in order to adapt to the modern world within the framework of lifelong learning awareness. Being one of the most important courses that prepare individuals for social life, social studies course assumes an important role in developing students' knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are necessary in their lives in a changing and constantly developing world order. For this reason, social studies course is an important course in terms of gaining various literacies. This study examines seven literacy skills in the social studies curriculum, which was renewed in 2018, namely environmental literacy, digital literacy, legal literacy, map literacy, financial literacy, political literacy and media literacy. The aim of the study is to examine the literacy skills given in the social studies curriculum in terms of relevant literature. In this context, the literacy skills given within the framework of the acquisitions within the learning areas in the program were examined and evaluations were made by supporting them with the relevant literature.

**Key words:** Social studies, social studies curriculum, skills, literacy.

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## **Introduction**

We observe that the concept of literacy has changed in the process up to the present day. The International Literacy Association defines literacy as "the ability to define, understand, interpret, create, calculate and communicate across disciplines and in any context using visual, audio and digital materials" (Dwyer, 2016). Literacy is acquiring knowledge, forming attitudes, and using skills to function within one's own culture and in an interconnected global civilization (Bank, 2004). In our age, literacy expresses the meaning and awareness of the first word added to it (Dubin & Kuhlman, 1992). The focus of the changes in the definition of literacy lies in the fact that conditions have changed, needs have differentiated, and this has affected the view of reading and writing instruction. The concept of literacy, as an important concept in the education policies of societies, is considered as a skill that attracts attention in a way that will affect today's education systems (Önal, 2010; Aşıcı, 2009). With the changing and developing world, the concept of literacy and the expressions that come to mind when literate individuals are mentioned have diversified. Literacy is the ability to use knowledge and skills in individual, social, economic and cultural areas, to create awareness of lifelong learning, to develop this awareness and to enable the individual to acquire new skills for more active learning (Uzun & Çelik, 2020; Aldemir, 2003). The 21st century world considers people who can express themselves effectively in every field, who have the skills and knowledge required by the age without being isolated from it, and who can meet their information needs through their own studies and research results as active individuals. The way to develop these skills is to increase students' literacy skills in different fields. Literacy is a skill that is necessary in education. In this context, it is an important subject that should be emphasized in schools. Therefore, literacy skills are taught to students through various courses. Social studies is one of the most important of these courses. Social studies is intertwined with life and is a course that provides the knowledge and skills necessary to continue our lives. In addition to including many disciplines in social studies, it aims to provide people with the literacy skills necessary in every field.

Looking at the social studies curriculum, we see that it aims to transfer many literacy skills to students due to its structure. The social studies curriculum includes environmental literacy, digital literacy, legal literacy, map literacy, financial literacy, political literacy and media literacy (MoNE, 2018). The social studies curriculum has

taken its place as an active course in providing individuals with the literacy skills required in the 21st century world. By emphasizing many literacy skills, the social studies course makes a significant contribution to society in raising active citizens of the future.

This study aims to make a general evaluation of the literacy skills in the social studies curriculum. In this context, this study examines the 7 literacy skills included within the social studies curriculum, which was renewed in 2018, through the relevant literature. In line with the purpose of the research, answers were sought for the following questions regarding the problem sentence "How are literacy skills in the social studies curriculum and related literature":

- 1- How is environmental literacy in the 2018 social studies curriculum and related literature?
- 2- How is digital literacy in the 2018 social studies curriculum and related literature?
- 3- How is financial Literacy in the 2018 social studies curriculum and related literature?
- 4- How is map Literacy in 2018 social studies curriculum and related literature?
- 5- How is legal Literacy in 2018 social studies curriculum and related literature?
- 6- How is media Literacy in the 2018 social studies curriculum and related literature?
- 7- How is political Literacy in the 2018 social studies curriculum and related literature?

## **Methods**

This section includes the research design, data collection and analysis titles. In the research, journal writing rules, publication principles, research and publication ethics rules, journal ethics rules were followed. Since the study was a document analysis, it was not included in the group of studies requiring Ethics Committee Permission. Therefore, Ethics Committee Permission was not declared.

## **Research Design**

The descriptive survey model was used in this research, which was conducted to examine the literacy skills in the social studies program, which was renewed in 2018, in the context of the relevant literature in Turkey (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2018). Survey is a research model that aims to describe a situation as it is. In the survey model, the object or individual can be examined directly, and the data obtained from various written documents can be interpreted within a system (Karasar, 2017).

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

In this study, data were collected using the document analysis method. This method can be defined as obtaining, reviewing, questioning and analyzing various documents, which are considered as primary or secondary sources that make up the data set of the research (Özkan, 2019). Document analysis is a systematic method used to examine or evaluate printed and electronic materials (Bowen, 2009).

The data source of the research collected by the document analysis method; The 2018 social studies curriculum consists of theses and scientific journal articles published in the national thesis center. There are some steps to be followed while doing a document review. The first step in researches in which document analysis is used is to reach the sources suitable for the purpose of the research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Since this research is aimed at examining the literacy skills in the social studies program, which was renewed in 2018, in the context of the relevant literature in Turkey; As the first stage of the data collection process; National Theses and scientific research articles on the official website of the Council of Higher Education were searched with the keywords "Social Studies and literacy", "Social Studies and literacy skills" within the scope of the research. The research was conducted using Google academic and CoHE thesis center databases. To reach relevant articles and theses, 47 articles, 27 master's theses and 10 doctoral theses were searched. In addition, the literacy in the 2018 social studies curriculum was scanned. In the second and third stages of the document review; The full texts of the accessed theses and articles were downloaded to the researcher's computer. Determining the validity and reliability of documents is a critical step in the document review process. Accuracy refers to whether scientific evidence is genuine and obtained from reliable and credible sources (Mogalakwe, 2006). These texts were first read and the semantic structure of their content was tried to be understood. During the reading, the opinions of the experts on the originality of the theses and articles were also consulted. In the fourth stage, in which the data obtained were analyzed, firstly, after the experts confirmed the originality of the theses and articles, the theses and articles were re-read and analyzed. The data obtained from the documents were analyzed and interpreted.

## **Limitation of the Research**

The research is limited to the 2018 social studies curriculum, published national theses in the thesis center of the Council of Higher Education, and articles in the google academic database.

## **Results**

In this section, the 7 literacy skills in the social studies program, which was renewed in 2018, and the findings obtained from the sub-problems asked about the literature on this subject in Turkey are presented and interpreted.

### **Findings of the First Sub-Problem**

Roth was the first to use the concept of environmental literacy. Roth defined environmental literacy as an individual's basic awareness and understanding of environmental problems. Roth later defined environmental literacy as the capacity to understand and interpret environmental systems by taking into account various aspects of environmental literacy and as requiring appropriate behaviors that should be done for the continuity, reconstruction or improvement of environmental systems (Roth, 1992:1). Environmental literacy is the ability to reflect one's knowledge about nature from the mental world to the action world as observable behaviors. In this sense, environmental literacy has components such as knowledge, attitude, value, behavior, skill and stages of awareness, concern, understanding and behavior (Şahin, Ünlü & Ünlü, 2016). Students who are environmentally literate have intellectual skills, knowledge, attitude, experience and motivation to act on responsible environmental decisions. Environmentally literate students understand environmental processes and can make responsible decisions as a part of their society and as a citizen of the world by thinking in detail about global, political, social, cultural, economic and various environmental issues and problems (NAAEE; 2000:2).

Social studies course takes its place as a very important course among the courses related to environmental education. However, one of the most important learning areas related to the environment in the social studies curriculum is 'People, Places and Environments'. The ultimate goal of the "People, Places and Environments" learning area is to eliminate this deficiency of humanity, which has become estranged from society and the environment as a result of technological developments experienced today (MEB, 2018). We understand that the program aims to provide students with the skills of environmental literacy, perception of change and continuity, research,

observation, map reading and interpretation of the environment at all grade levels where social studies is taught.

We understand that some general objectives of the social studies curriculum are related to the subjects that form the basis of environmental literacy. Examples of this are the "relationship between natural and social systems" and "integration of humans with nature", which are the focus of environmental literacy, and the statement "explains the interaction between humans and the natural environment by recognizing the geographical features of the environment and the world they live in" within the general objectives of social studies.

Analyzing the relevant literature, we come across studies on environmental literacy in social studies education with regard to social studies teacher candidates (Artun, Uzunöz & Akbaş, 2013; Karatekin, 2011; Karatekin & Aksoy, 2012), primary school students (Güler, 2013; Ergin, 2013), secondary school students (Akıllı & Genç, 2015; Aslan & Bulut, 2021; Erdoğan, 2009; Erkılıç, 2019; Şahin, 2015; Ulu Kalın, 2018; Varışlı, 2009; Yavuz, Balkan Kıyıcı & Atabek, 2014; Yılmaz, 2019), secondary education students (Can, 2013; Can, Üner, & Akkuş, 2016) and the program itself (Pala, 2022; Karatekin, 2013). When the research findings are examined in detail, it is seen that the following conclusions have been reached.

Aslan and Bulut (2021) found that activity-based teaching increased students' environmental literacy levels. Ulu Kalın (2018) concluded that the environmental literacy levels of middle school 7th grade students were at a high level. Güler (2013) found that students' environmental knowledge, responsible behaviors towards the environment at a medium level, affective tendencies at a high level, and cognitive skills at a low level. According to the average scores of the students from these components, it was concluded that their environmental literacy levels were at a medium level. Ergin (2013) reported that although elementary school students had poor environmental knowledge, they had positive attitudes and high interest in the environment. Şahin (2015) revealed that the environmental literacy levels of secondary school students were at a medium level. In his study, Karatekin (2011) found that pre-service social studies teachers' environmental knowledge and environmental behaviors were at a medium level, their affective tendencies were at a high level, and their cognitive skills were at a low level. Looking at the average of the total scores of the pre-service teachers, it is observed that their environmental literacy levels are at a medium level. In their study, Karatekin and Aksoy (2012) found that the environmental literacy levels

of pre-service teachers were at a medium level. Artun, Uzunöz, and Akbaş (2013) concluded that factors such as gender, type of school graduated from, mother and father's education level did not affect the environmental literacy levels of pre-service teachers. In his study, Erdoğan (2009) revealed that fifth grade students were moderately environmentally literate. Varioğlu (2009) found that 8th grade students had little or moderate environmental knowledge, had positive attitudes towards the environment, were sensitive about environmental issues and had concerns about environmental problems. Akıllı and Genç (2015) reported that the gender of secondary school students made a difference only for behavior among the sub-dimensions of environmental literacy, and the levels increased for all dimensions with increasing grade level. Can, Üner, and Akkuş (2016) found that as the grade level increases, the level of environmental knowledge and environmental interest and positive behaviors towards environmental use increase. Erkiş (2019) revealed that students have a moderate level of environmental literacy and a good level of attitude towards the environment. Yılmaz (2019) on the other hand, found that middle school students have a moderate level of environmental literacy. In addition, his study determined that the environmental literacy levels of middle school students varied according to their curiosity about the environment and the frequency of being in natural areas. In his study, Pala (2022) examined the distribution of environmental literacy skills according to the achievements of the 2005 and 2018 social studies curriculum and found that this skill was included in all grade levels in both programs.

Considering the results of the studies on environmental literacy in social studies in the relevant literature, we observe that the studies were conducted with various study groups. The findings of the research indicate that the environmental literacy levels of prospective teachers and secondary school students are generally at a medium level. Accordingly, we can say that environmental literacy skills of students at all levels are not at the desired level. Another point that draws attention in the study results is that although environmental literacy levels are high in affective dimension, they are low in cognitive and behavioural dimensions. On the other hand, when we examine the study results in the relevant literature, we see that activity-based teaching, curiosity about the environment and the frequency of being in natural areas increase the environmental literacy levels of students. For this reason, we believe that it would be beneficial to develop students' environmental literacy skills at all levels and to carry out out-of-class applications and activities for this purpose. In addition, although this skill

is included in the acquisitions for environmental literacy in the social studies curriculum, we believe that it is useful to increase this skill in terms of quantity and quality at all grade levels.

### **Findings of the Second Sub-Problem**

Ribble (2011) defines digital literacy as "the process of using technology and learning and teaching about technology". Martin (2005), on the other hand, describes digital literacy as "developing individuals' awareness, attitudes and abilities to use digital tools, accessing digital resources, evaluating what they access, integrating, analysing and synthesising, creating new information, communicating with people, and reflecting this process to social life through constructive social actions". As one of the 21st century skills, digital literacy involves utilising information and communication technologies in order for learning processes to progress faster (Van Laar et al., 2017). Digital literacy is one of the skills aimed to be gained by students in the social studies curriculum. The social studies course, which is based on social life, involves learning information in various structures and teaching its application within the multidimensional structure of life. In this respect, it aims to provide digital literacy, which is a skill related to the interpretation and learning of data obtained through technological instruments (Bayram, 2020: 211). The curriculum of the social studies course includes the following statement regarding digital literacy skills: "To use information and communication technologies consciously by comprehending the development process of science and technology and its effects on social life" (MoNE, 2018d, p. 8). Accordingly, we can say that the social studies course aims to teach students to use technology consciously. In this sense, the importance of digital literacy, which is a skill for the correct interpretation of information obtained through technological tools, with respect to the social studies course can be grasped in line with this purpose.

The 5th grade Science, Technology and Society Learning Content in the social studies curriculum outcomes includes the statement "While teaching this learning area, students should acquire values such as honesty, diligence and science ethics, as well as skills such as self-control and digital literacy". Given this statement, we can say that the emphasis on digital literacy is important for social studies teaching.

Looking at the related literature, we come across studies on digital literacy in social studies education related to pre-service teachers (Kuru, 2019; Önger & Çetin, 2018;



Tepe, 2019; Yaman, 2019:); secondary school students (Çelik, 2021; Pala, & Başibüyük, 2020), and social studies curriculum (Altun & Bangir Alpan, 2021). When the research findings are examined in detail, it is seen that the following conclusions have been reached.

In his study, Yaman (2019) found that there was a statistically significant difference between the grade level of pre-service teachers and the digital literacy scale in terms of attitude, technical, cognitive, social and overall scale. Considering the course contents given in the higher education process, he concluded that pre-service teachers are not given any training on digital literacy starting from the 1st grade to the 4th grade level. In his study, Kuru (2019) reported that pre-service social studies teachers lacked knowledge about the concept of digital literacy and that the concept was misinterpreted by some candidates. In their studies, Çelik (2021) and Pala and Başibüyük (2020) found that the digital literacy levels of secondary school students were high. As a result of the analysis of the data obtained, they determined that the digital literacy scale scores of the students differed significantly according to the mother's education level, father's education level, the presence of internet connection at home, the presence of a computer or tablet at home, and the frequency of connecting to the internet. Altun and Bangir Alpan (2021) determined that there are regular acquisitions related to digital literacy skills at all grade levels in the social studies curriculum. They also observed that digital literacy was included more in Turkish, social studies and life science curricula than in other curricula.

Reviewing the results of the related literature on digital literacy in social studies, we can say that the majority of the studies were conducted on prospective teachers. Based on the findings of the research, we see that adjustments should be made in the course content to help improve the digital literacy of pre-service social studies teachers. In addition, the researchers have found that the digital literacy levels of secondary school students are high. The fact that children are intertwined with the digital environment in our age may be said to have an effect on this result that most students use digital technologies at home and at schools. However, we understand that digital literacy is included more comprehensively in the social studies curriculum compared to other curricula. The special aims of the course and the emphasis on digital literacy among the skills aimed to be provided show that the subject is handled in a planned manner and that it is important in terms of social studies.

### 3.3. Findings of the Third Sub-Problem

Financial literacy is the ability to read, analyse, manage and calculate individual financial conditions that affect material well-being (Vitt et al., 2000). For today's children and youth, who find themselves in a complex financial environment with many financial responsibilities, the contribution of financial education to be provided in schools will be high in order to cope with these difficulties (Amagir et al., 2018).

Since individuals may have to work from childhood, this skill should be acquired at an early age. Individuals who acquire financial literacy skills in childhood are more conscious and sensitive about budgeting, investing and economics. Individuals with high financial literacy are more experienced to make the right decisions and to constructively criticise and support the economic world they live in (OECD, 2012).

Social studies course is one of the most important courses that prepares the individual for social life and tries to gain the skills that the individual needs for daily life. Social studies course has a significant role in the development of financial literacy skills. When the "2018 Social Studies Curriculum" is examined, it is seen that the discipline of economics is given in the program with an interdisciplinary approach in relation to financial literacy skills (Önlen, 2022). The discipline of economics was included in the social studies curriculum with the aim of "understanding the basic concepts of economy and understanding the place of national economy in development and international economic relations..." (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2018). Furthermore, equipping students with the necessary knowledge and skills to make sound decisions on economic issues and showing that they can use the financial information they encounter in social life with real life experiences is a necessity for their future lives (Akhan, 2013).

A review of the related literature reveals that there are studies on financial literacy in social studies education (Yalçinkaya & Er, 2019) on pre-service teachers (Adalar, 2019; Er, 2019) on teacher views (Seyhan, 2020) on gaining financial literacy skills (Önlen, 2022; Ünlüer, 2021) on secondary school students (Arıkan, 2021; Ertoğrul, 2020; Karaaslan, 2020; Köroğlu, 2021) and on the programme itself (Mammadova, 2020). When the research findings are examined in detail, it is seen that the following conclusions have been reached.

The study by Mammadova (2020) on the attitudes and opinions of students about financial literacy in the outcomes in primary and secondary school curricula shows that the highest number of learning outcomes related to financial literacy is included in the Social Studies curriculum at the primary and secondary school (1st-8th grade) level.

The study conducted by Yalçinkaya and Er (2019) revealed that the social studies curriculum includes achievements aimed at being aware of economic activities in the immediate environment and the country in general. However, in the study, the authors emphasised that it will not be possible to gain the expected behaviours in financial literacy education only with the pure information given in the classroom, and in order to achieve this, it is necessary to give importance to out-of-class teaching activities, which are among the most important teaching practices inherent in social studies. In his study, Seyhan (2020) reported that the majority of social studies teachers do not know the methods, techniques and activities that can effectively develop financial literacy skills. The results of the research conducted by Koroğlu (2021) and Karaaslan (2020) show that students need more development to gain financial literacy skills. The results of the research conducted by Ünlüer (2021) concluded that the activities related to financial literacy skills increased the financial literacy levels of students. The study by Adalar (2019) titled "Financial literacy and teaching in social studies teacher education: A model proposal" revealed that a financial literacy education model in which real life experiences are included for financial literacy content such as individual money management, saving and spending can be applied very effectively in improving the financial literacy of pre-service social studies teachers and increasing the functionality of the economics course. Er (2019) concluded that pre-service teachers' money management and money management self-efficacy perceptions are at an average level and need to be improved.

Considering the results of the studies conducted in the relevant literature on financial literacy in social studies education, we see that the social studies curriculum includes more outputs to gain financial literacy skills compared to other curricula, but there is emphasis on implementing practices to include more activities to ensure that students acquire the desired behaviours. In addition, results of these studies showed that the activities related to financial literacy skills increased the financial literacy levels of the students. On the other hand, the studies revealed that teachers are not familiar with the methods, techniques and activities that can effectively develop financial literacy skills. In this respect, it is important to focus on studies for the development of teachers. On the other hand, the results of the study revealed that prospective teachers and students at the primary education level need to be developed towards becoming a financially literate individual.

## **Findings of the Fourth Sub-Problem**

Map literacy is considered very important in terms of people's perception of space and their ability to establish a place-event relationship (Akengin, Tuncel, & Gendek, 2016). Map literacy is to provide people with the ability to understand and interpret actions, objects, thoughts, graphics and symbols, to provide lifelong learning awareness, and to gain problem solving skills with effective learning in development (Sönmez, 2013). In the Social Studies Curriculum, with the learning area named People, Places and Environments, "students at all grade levels are tried to acquire important skills such as research, environmental literacy, perception of change and continuity, observation, as well as map literacy and perception of space" (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2018). The Social Studies Curriculum includes knowledge, skills, concepts and values related to map literacy in the "People, Places and Environments" learning area. In this learning area, there are skills such as perceiving space, map literacy, map use and location analysis and key concepts related to these skills. One of the active teaching methods in social studies is related to map reading, understanding and using skills. The focus of the perception of space in social studies teaching is the ability to use maps and atlases. Maps play a great role in the perception of space (Göksel, 2007). Map skills are required in most of the discipline areas within the scope of social studies course. From an early age, the use of maps and globes is necessary for children to understand the basics of geography and to recognise the environment they live in. Students can only realise this through the social studies courses (Sönmez, 2013)

Individuals who develop the ability to use maps also develop skills such as problem solving and analysing. In this way, it is possible for students to become individuals who live in peace in the global society and have gained citizenship awareness (Bennett, 1997). In a rapidly changing world, people need to have basic skills in map literacy. In order for the social studies course to be effective in terms of map literacy, these skills should be taught through a combination of skills.

Looking at the literature, we see that there are a number of studies on map literacy skills of middle school students (Aydoğdu, 2022; Can, 2021; Erol, 2017; Görmez, 2021; Kuzey, 2016), pre-service teachers (Balcı, 2015; Duman & Girgin, 2007; Koç & Çiftçi, 2016; Kuzey & Değirmenci, 2019) about the curriculum (Kuzey, 2017) and social sciences teachers' opinions ( Akengin, Tuncel, & Cendek, 2016; Cendek 2015). When the research findings are examined in detail, it is seen that the following conclusions have been reached.

The study conducted by Akengin, Tuncel, & Cendek, 2016 on the opinions of social studies teachers regarding the development of map literacy in students concluded that social studies teachers did not have sufficient knowledge about map literacy and could not do enough work on developing map literacy skills in students due to the insufficiency of the course hours and the intensity of the acquisitions. The findings of the study conducted by Erol (2017) revealed that the map literacy levels of 7th grade middle school students were mostly at the moderate level. The findings of the research conducted by Görmez (2021) suggest that students do not have sufficient knowledge about the concept of map, the criteria that should be included in the map, types of maps, the meanings of the colors used in the map, the meanings of the symbols on the map and the concept of earth. The study conducted by Duman and Girgin (2007) found that pre-service teachers were of the opinion that there was not enough space for map applications in schools. Kuzey & Değirmenci, 2019) revealed that pre-service social studies teachers have misconceptions about some map and direction concepts. Considering the results of the research on map literacy in social studies in the relevant literature, we see that the studies were conducted with various study groups. The findings of the research show that map literacy skills are not at the desired level. For this reason, we believe that it would be beneficial to develop students' map and direction skills at all levels and to carry out various applications and activities in order to reduce their misconceptions about these concepts. In this regard, pre-service teachers should be given the basic concepts related to the courses in the teaching process and especially practical studies related to these basic concepts should be emphasized.

### **Findings of the Fifth Sub-Problem**

Legal literacy includes reading, writing, speaking and thinking skills for the operation of legal processes. Legal literacy provides individuals with different functions such as defining legal situations and recognizing individuals related to them (Bilder, 1999). Legal literacy is an important issue in today's society. At school age, students in the process of preparing for their future lives need to develop awareness of minimum legal issues. This awareness will help students become responsible citizens (Patil & Lavanya, 2012).

Legal literacy is important for raising individuals who recognize their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society and who can seek their rights by using legal processes. Legal literacy is the ability to read and understand the sources and terms

of law correctly. Legal literacy requires the individual to be able to use the concepts of law in the right place at the right time when they encounter them in their lives. The ability to put the rules of law into practice is also important in terms of the rules of law that ensure social order (Oğuz, 2013). Law is also an important discipline in the social studies course, which includes social science disciplines. In this course, it is aimed to provide students with the knowledge, skills and values that will help them become active members of the society in which they live. In addition, the discipline of law in this course includes the order, rights and responsibilities that exist in the society in which students live (Çengelci Köse & Bursa, 2020).

The social studies course, which aims to help individuals adapt to social life, needs to benefit from legal concepts and knowledge in the teaching of human rights, democracy and citizenship issues (Yazıcı & Erdilmen, 2015). Looking at the general objectives of the Social Studies Curriculum, we see that 9 out of a total of 17 items are related to legal and political literacy. Accordingly, the social studies course has the most important function in providing students with legal and political literacy (Kara, & Tangülü, 2017). Analyzing the relevant literature, we come across studies on legal literacy in social studies education related to secondary school students (Oğuz, 2013), pre-service teachers (Çengelci Köse & Bursa, 2020; Kara, 2017; Kara & Tangülü, 2021), and the Social Studies Curriculum (Kara & Tangülü, 2017). When the research findings are examined in detail, it is seen that the following conclusions have been reached.

In their study examining the legal literacy levels of pre-service social studies teachers, Kara and Tangülü (2021) found that pre-service teachers' legal literacy knowledge, attitudes and behaviors were at an intermediate level, but pre-service teachers did not consider themselves sufficient in teaching subjects related to law in relation to the social studies course. The study conducted by Çengelci Köse & Bursa, 2020) found that pre-service teachers have some ideas about the definition of legal literacy. The study conducted by Oğuz (2013) revealed that the legal literacy levels of secondary school students were at a high level according to the determined values. The study also concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between the dimensions of legal literacy, namely knowledge, affect and behavior, which are close to the medium level. In their study examining legal literacy and political literacy in the Social Studies Curriculum, Kara and Tangülü (2017) stated that although the Social Studies Curriculum has elements related to legal literacy in the dimensions of general

objectives, outcomes, concepts, skills and values, the association with the curriculum should be strengthened, especially in the skills dimension.

Analyzing the results of the studies on legal literacy in social studies education, we can say that the majority of the studies were conducted on pre-service teachers. However, studies aimed at obtaining the opinions of secondary school students and teachers can be increased. The findings of these studies suggest that pre-service teachers' legal literacy levels are not sufficient and that this skill needs to be improved. However, the studies also emphasize that legal literacy should be strengthened in the social studies curriculum in terms of skills.

### **Findings of the Sixth Sub-Problem**

Media literacy is generally defined as the ability to decode, analyze, evaluate and produce media messages of various types (visual, audio, print, electronic, etc.) (Aufderheide, 1992). Media literacy has cognitive, emotional, moral and aesthetic dimensions in accessing and structuring information. Having knowledge about all dimensions enables individuals to realize their own characteristics and deficiencies and to evaluate media messages in this respect (Potter, 2005). Haider and Dall (2004), in their definition of a media literate individual, emphasize that the individuals should evaluate media messages from various sources. They also stated that a media literate individual should follow media technologies, learn about the history of their development, and have the ability to analyze and evaluate manipulative messages created by the media.

Social events and current issues that arise in social life are included in the content of the social studies course, which aims to raise citizens who have acquired social values, are responsible and can think effectively. Effective citizenship, which is aimed to be taught to students through the social studies course, requires raising awareness about current events in life, making sense of and interpreting the news encountered in the media. Since the social studies course has an active content, it is very important to provide students with media literacy, which includes knowledge and skills for understanding and interpreting the news, through the activities to be carried out in this course (Deveci & Çengelci, 2008).

The 5th grade Science, Technology and Society Learning Area, which is included in the Social Studies Curriculum outcomes, includes the statement 'media literacy is emphasized' under the outcome 'questions the accuracy and reliability of the information they access in the virtual environment'. In addition, the 7th grade Individual

and Society Learning Area includes the statement 'While processing this learning area, it should be ensured that values such as freedom and responsibility and skills such as communication and media literacy are acquired by students'. Given this statement in the learning area, we can say that the emphasis on media literacy is important for social studies teaching.

Analyzing the relevant literature, we come across studies on media literacy in social studies education with regard to pre-service teachers (Aksoy, 2021; Çelik, 2011; Çepni, O., Palaz, T., & Ablak, S., 2015; Çineliöđlu, 2013; Deveci & Çengelci, 2008; Dolanbay, Akengin, & Tuncel, 2021; Güney, 2018; Özel, 2018; Uslu, Yazıcı, & Çetin, 2016) already serving teachers (Sarı, 2021, Yıldırım, 2017); social studies curriculum (Altun, 2010), related to secondary school students (Görmez, 2014; Kurtulmuş, 2014; Naza, 2014; Özay, 2014; Yardım, 2019) and also with respect to the comparison of postgraduate studies (Ardıç, 2016). When the research findings are examined in detail, it is seen that the following conclusions have been reached.

In their study, Deveci and Çengelci (2008) reported that more than half of the pre-service teachers stated that the media literacy of other pre-service teachers studying in the Social Studies Teacher Education Program was insufficient. In the study conducted by Sarı, (2021), secondary school teachers who taught the media literacy course stated that within the scope of the objectives of the course, students' participation and interest levels in the media literacy course were high, but they encountered difficulties related to the implementation and use of media literacy course material and measurement and evaluation. The study conducted by Çineliöđlu (2013) found that the general attitude scores of pre-service teachers who had taken a media literacy course were higher than those of pre-service teachers who had not yet taken the course. Dolanbay, Akengin, and Tuncel (2021) reported that pre-service teachers' negative perceptions of themselves about media literacy before the training show a positive change after the training. There are studies in the relevant literature where pre-service teachers' media literacy perceptions are at a good level (Aksoy, 2021, Özel, 2018; Güney, 2018; Uslu, Yazıcı, & Çetin, 2016; Çepni, O., Palaz, T., & Ablak, S. 2015). On the other hand, the studies in the relevant literature show that middle school students generally perceive the media literacy course positively (Naza, 2014; Yardım, 2019; Görmez, 2014).

A review of the related literature on media literacy in social studies education reveals that studies were conducted with various study groups. Accordingly, the findings of the



studies conducted with pre-service teachers indicate that pre-service teachers' perceptions of media literacy are at a good level. On the other hand, considering the related research findings, we can say that the media literacy course has a positive effect on students.

### **Findings of the Seventh Sub-Problem**

Political literacy ensures the acquisition of the knowledge, skills and values required for effective and wise decision-making in democratic participation (Fyfe, 2007, p.113). Zaller (1992) defines political literacy as the ability of individuals to understand a political event and gain political awareness.

The education system should teach children what they need to know about contemporary politics, how to respect and understand others even if they do not share their values, and how to be volunteers in school, outside school and in society (Crick and Porter, 1978).

In order to develop political literacy skills, students should be given the opportunity to participate from an early age. The skill of the social studies course related to the purpose of raising effective citizens is political literacy. Therefore, we can consider it as one of the most basic skills that students should acquire (Gençtürk & Karatekin, 2013). In order for an individual to be able to discuss current political events related to the past and present, he/she needs to have basic political knowledge. Social studies is an important subject because it provides students with knowledge about current social problems by dealing with the past and present (Arın & Deveci, 2008). With the Active Citizen Learning Area added to the revised Social Studies Program, political literacy skills serve the purpose of raising "active citizens". The Social Studies Program has learning areas (People, Places and Environments, Individual and Society, Production, Distribution and Consumption, and Active Citizenship) that include learning outcomes aimed at developing political literacy skills. Furthermore, the program includes many concepts that form the basis of political literacy skills such as human rights, freedom, constitution, law, independence, social participation, respect for differences, children's rights, democracy, freedom of thought, freedom of communication, right to participation, duties and responsibilities of citizens, taxation, conscious consumer, democratic and non-democratic forms of government, etc. (Görmez, 2018).

Examining the related literature, we come across studies on political literacy in social studies education related to pre-service teachers (Faiz & Dönmez, 2019; Tarhan,

2015), social studies curriculum (Görmez, 2018), Kara, & Tangülü, 2017), and secondary school students (Aslan, 2019; Yavaş, 2021). When the research findings are examined in detail, it is seen that the following conclusions have been reached.

The results of the study conducted by Tarhan (2015) revealed that the majority of the participants did not see themselves as a politically literate individual and could not internalize the necessary and important concepts of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for political literacy. The findings of the study conducted by Faiz and Dönmez (2019) showed that the knowledge dimension of political literacy, political literacy affective trends and skills/behaviors of pre-service social studies teachers were found to be at a moderate level. The results of the study conducted by Aslan (2019) with secondary school students showed that students were relatively positive in terms of political behavior but had moderate skills in terms of other dimensions. A study conducted by Yavaş (2021) with secondary school students found that students had a majority of unscientific or superficial knowledge, as well as misconceptions about the concepts of republic and public opinion. In their study, Kara & Tangülü (2017) and Görmez (2018) concluded that the Social Studies Curriculum, which has seven learning areas, includes units, themes and achievements related to political literacy skills in four learning areas and that the curriculum includes this skill at a sufficient level.

The results of the studies conducted in the relevant literature on political literacy in social studies education suggest that political literacy skills are adequately included in the social studies curriculum. On the other hand, the research findings also show that political literacy skills are not at the desired level. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct more in-depth research on students' political literacy skills in order to help students acquire this skill.

## **Discussions**

This study examined the literacy skills given within the framework of the outcomes in the social studies curriculum and made evaluations supported by the relevant literature. Accordingly, the study revealed that some of the general objectives of the social studies curriculum have a close relationship with the subjects that form the basis of environmental literacy, and that this skill is included in the achievements related to environmental literacy in the social studies curriculum. Karatekin (2013) stated that the objectives of the social studies course and the subjects in the focus of environmental

literacy skills are closely related. In addition, Ulu Kalın (2018) stated that environmental literacy skills are included in the social studies curriculum. On the other hand, we can say that students' environmental literacy skills are not at the desired level at all grades. Another point that draws attention in the research results is that environmental literacy levels are high in the affective dimension, but low in the cognitive and behavioral dimensions.

One of the issues to be considered in the implementation of the Social Studies Curriculum is that the values and skills given in the Program should be associated with different acquisitions and learning areas that are deemed appropriate in order to deal with them within the framework of lifelong learning. In this context, it is seen that the political literacy, legal literacy and map literacy skills that should be given in the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TYÇ) are not sufficiently supported by different achievements and learning areas in the program, and when the research findings in the relevant literature are examined, it is revealed that they are not at the desired level. However, although it is seen that outputs aimed at acquiring digital literacy and financial literacy skills are given more space compared to other curricula, it is understood that applications should be made to include more activities for gaining the desired behaviors. In the study conducted by Pala (2022), it was determined that there are some deficiencies in the distribution of literacy skills in the social studies curriculum to grade level and learning areas.

Regarding literacy skills in social studies education, when the related literature in Turkey is examined, it is seen that most of the studies were conducted on pre-service teachers. Goktas et al. (2012) and Güleç and Hüdavendigâr (2020), it has been determined that the study is mostly done with pre-service teachers. It is possible to say that pre-service teachers are preferred because they are an easily accessible group. When the research findings in these studies are examined, it is understood that the level of digital literacy and media literacy perceptions of teacher candidates are generally at a sufficient level depending on their use and follow-up of digital technologies. It has been stated that the pre-service teachers, who are at medium level in terms of environmental literacy, have insufficient mapping, legal and political literacy skills and that financial literacy skills need to be developed. On the other hand, secondary school students' environmental literacy skills are not at the desired level at all levels, their digital literacy level and media literacy perceptions develop due to their use and follow-up of digital technologies, map literacy skills are not at the desired level,

especially in terms of direction and misconceptions, financial literacy skills take more place in the curriculum. However, it is emphasized that the legal and political literacy is insufficient and that these literacy skills should be strengthened in the social studies curriculum.

As a result, it should be given in accordance with the nature of the social studies course, which has emerged with the philosophy of raising a good citizen. In order to keep up with the developments in the rapidly and continuously changing world with science and technology, the social studies course should be kept up-to-date and organized in accordance with the needs of the age. For this reason, the social studies course should focus on the issues that concern the society at the local and global level, and this awareness should be gained at the cognitive, affective and behavioral level by raising awareness of these issues to the students. Therefore, it is necessary to follow the global developments continuously and, if necessary, to bring new literacy into the social studies program.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Based on the results of the research, new literacy fields that are suitable for the needs of the 21st century and shed light on the future can be brought into the social studies program by constantly following the global developments. It can be stated that with the 2024 program, literacy has come to the fore and efforts are being made to keep up with the needs of the age. The literacy given in the social studies curriculum should be adequately supported by associating them with more and different acquisitions and learning areas. Literacy skills should be gained effectively through practical activities in schools. It can be said that most of the studies on literacy were conducted on teacher candidates. For this reason, more studies can be conducted with secondary school students, teachers and other sample groups related to the subject, and different perspectives can be gained.

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