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A study on how history topics are discussed in social studies curriculum

Sosyal bilgiler öğretim programında tarih konularının ele alınış biçimlerinin incelenmesi

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ABSTRACT

The 2024 Social Studies Curriculum consists of 6 learning areas, Living Together, Our Home is the World, Our Common Heritage, Our Living Democracy, Economy in Our Lives, Technology and Social Sciences. The Social Studies Curriculum consists of inter-program components including conceptual skills and field skills, tendencies, social-emotional learning skills, values and literacy skills, learning outcomes where the skills, attitudes and behavior to be acquired in the learning area are written, the evidence of learning including measurement and evaluation tools to be used in the learning and teaching process, content framework including the subject headings in the learning area, learning-teaching practices where the appropriate strategy, method and technique for the learning outcome are determined, and differentiation sections where alternative learning practices determined by taking the individual differences of the students into account are included. This study was conducted to investigate how history topics are addressed in the Social Studies Curriculum prepared within the scope of the 2024 Türkiye Century Education Model and what kind of approach is taken in this regard. In the study, the 2024 Türkiye Century Education Model Social Studies Curriculum was examined within the scope of document review. Document review is a systematic technique used to examine and evaluate all documents, including printed and electronic objects.

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ÖZ

2024 Sosyal Bilimler Öğretim Programı, Birlikte Yaşamak, Evimiz Dünya, Ortak Mirasımız, Yaşayan Demokrasimiz, Hayatımızdaki Ekonomi, Teknoloji ve Sosyal Bilimler şeklinde 6 öğrenme alanında meydana gelmiştir. Sosyal Bilimler Dersi Öğretim Programı; kavramsal beceriler ve alan becerileri, eğilimler, sosyal-duygusal öğrenme becerileri, değerler ve okuryazarlık becerilerinin bulunduğu programlar arası bileşenler, öğrenme alanının kazandırılması amaçlanan beceri, tutum ve davranışların yazıldığı öğrenme çıktıları, öğrenme ve öğretme sürecinde kullanılacak ölçme ve değerlendirme araçlarının bulunduğu öğrenme kanıtları, öğrenme alanındaki konu başlıklarının yer aldığı içerik çerçevesi, öğrenme çıktısına uygun strateji, yöntem ve tekniğin belirlendiği öğrenme-öğretme uygulamaları, öğrencilerin bireysel farklı-

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lıkları dikkate alınarak belirlenen alternatif öğrenme uygulamalarının yer aldığı farklılaştırma bölümlerinden oluşmaktadır. Bu araştırma, 2024 Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Modeli kapsamında hazırlanan Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretim Programında tarih konularının nasıl ele alındığını ve bu konuda nasıl bir yaklaşım sergilendiğini araştırmak amacıyla yapılmıştır. Araştırmada doküman incelemesi kapsamında 2024 Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Modeli Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretim Programı incelenmiştir. Doküman incelemesi, matbu ve elektronik objeler olmak üzere bütün belgelerin incelenmesi ve değerlendirilmesi kullanılan sistematik bir tekniktir.

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INTRODUCTION

The field of science that brings together other disciplines of science such as history, geography, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, economics, law, and politics under one title is called social sciences. The field of study which is meant to help influential, sensitive, and responsible citizens be raised as a consequence of all these disciplines melting in the same pot is called social studies.

Social studies, especially as one of the main courses, is a field of study that has undertaken the task of helping to educate ideal citizens. The ultimate goal of multinational organizations and states all over the world has been the reflex of providing their people for a life together and in peace. For this reason, they have attached high importance to education and have done their best to make it happen.

The threshold of education all over the world is the curriculum. All educational tools, equipment and materials prepared within the scope of curriculum studies are designed for better development of students. As is the case in the rest of the world, several important studies have been carried out on this subject in our country.

Social studies has had a turbulent history as one of the core subjects in the school curriculum. The fundamental content of the social studies curriculum – the study of human enterprise across space and time –however, has always been at the core of educational endeavors (Ross, 2014).

The National Council for the Social Sciences (NCSS) promotes civic competence as a goal for social sciences around the world. In doing so, NCSS recognizes the importance of developing students who are committed to ideas and values for the survival of democratic life and who can use information about communities and nations, and who have the skills to collect and analyze data, collaborate, make decisions, and solve problems. Students who have these commitments, knowledge, and skills will be most capable of shaping the future of the world and sustaining and advancing democracy.

The Turkish Education System aims to improve individuals in all aspects and is based on a holistic education approach. With this goal and approach, the “Türkiye Century Education Model” has been developed to effectively support

the multifaceted development of students, considering conceptual skills, field skills, social-emotional learning skills, tendencies, values and literacy skills as a whole.

The Social Studies Course Curriculum has been developed to provide individuals with the skills they need in social matters, based on changing and developing world conditions (MOE, 2024).

The discipline of history is one of the most important fields of study that constitute social sciences. Throughout the history of the Republic, it has been observed that history has a deep influence in the programs. This reveals how important history has been in social life. It is observed that history takes an important place in the social studies curriculum prepared within the scope of the 2024 Education Model.

The 2024 Social Studies Curriculum consists of 6 learning areas, Living Together, Our Home is the World, Our Common Heritage, Our Living Democracy, Economy in Our Lives, Technology and Social Sciences.

The Social Studies Curriculum consists of inter-program components including conceptual skills and field skills, tendencies, social-emotional learning skills, values and literacy skills, learning outcomes where the skills, attitudes and behavior to be acquired in the learning area are written, the evidence of learning including measurement and evaluation tools to be used in the learning and teaching process, content framework including the subject headings in the learning area, learning-teaching practices where the appropriate strategy, method and technique for the learning outcome are determined, and differentiation sections where alternative learning practices determined by taking the individual differences of the students into account are included. Therefore, history is also an important component in terms of skills, especially values. In this context; it is important to examine how history topics are studied in the Social Studies Curriculum.

The Purpose of the Study

This study was conducted to investigate how history topics are addressed in the Social Studies Curriculum prepared within the scope of the 2024 Türkiye Century Education Model and what kind of approach is taken in this regard.

METHOD

In the study, the 2024 Türkiye Century Education Model Social Studies Curriculum was examined within the scope of document review. Document review is a systematic technique used to examine and evaluate all documents, including printed and electronic objects. Like all methods used in qualitative research, document review also provides the examination and interpretation of data in order to derive meaning, develop an understanding and empirical knowledge about a subject (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

FINDINGS

The basic approach and specific objectives of the Social Studies Curriculum include the following statement: “The Social Studies Curriculum aims to provide students with conceptual skills (basic, integrated, higher-order thinking), field skills (perceiving time and chronological thinking, evidence-based questioning and research, historical empathy, understanding change and continuity, etc.), social and emotional learning skills (self, social life, common/joint), literacy skills (information, digital, financial, visual, culture, citizenship, data, sustainability, art), tendencies (self, social, intellectual) and values (justice, family integrity, diligence, friendship, sensitivity, freedom, responsibility, etc.)”

The Social Studies Course Curriculum, prepared based on the “General Purposes and Basic Principles of Turkish National Education” as stated in Article 2 of the National Education Basic Law No. 1739, aims to ensure that students; “8. Be responsible individuals who are aware of the contributions of the Turkish nation to the common heritage of humanity, Turkish history, culture, national and spiritual values and have deep feelings in the protection and development of the common cultural heritage, 9. Conclude that the state tradition that Turkish history has carried from the past to the present is the foundation of the Republic of Türkiye today...”

The learning outcomes in the 9th program of the Principles Regarding the Implementation of the Social Studies Curriculum were written based on the skills and process components related to them in the Türkiye Century Education Model. In this model, adaptations can be made in the process components of conceptual and field skills that form the basis of the learning outcome and in the actions that need to be experienced in order for the skills to be realized. In this context, similar meaning expressions such as “developing perspective” were rephrased as “historical empathy” in the learning outcome, and “synthesizing” as “achieving an original product”. Some outcomes of the curriculum were obtained using all integrated field skills such as social participation and historical empathy. In this case, the process components of sub-integrated skills were not stated separately, these integrated skills were used by transforming them into a process component. In the 12th program content, emphasis is placed on historical characters

who stand out with their thoughts, actions, personality traits and works. In teaching-learning practices, while providing the biographies of historical characters, memorization should be avoided, and the contributions of these people to the field in question and the works they produced should be emphasized.

In the “Our Common Heritage” learning area of the Social Studies Teaching Inter-Program Components (Social-Emotional Learning Skills, Values, Literacy Skills) Content Framework; the history of games and toys, family history, our common cultural heritage, social life in the first settlements of Anatolia, contributions of Mesopotamian and Anatolian civilizations to the common cultural heritage were emphasized. The contributions of the first Turkish states established in the geography of Turkestan to our civilization, the changes experienced in Turkish social and cultural life with the acceptance of Islam, the process of Turkification and Islamization of Anatolia, the policies that were effective in the Ottoman Empire becoming a world state, the innovations implemented by the Ottoman Empire in the face of changing global balance, and the Ottoman culture and civilization were mentioned. The program also included the statement that “while values are being transferred to life, the positive impact of our national spiritual culture and great figures in our history on teaching values can be utilized. In order to observe and experience lifestyles in line with values, in-school and out-of-school learning environments should also be utilized.”

In the learning area called “Our Common Heritage” of the Social Studies Curriculum, it is stated that “students should be encouraged to make sense of our common heritage through activities of games, toys and family history, to recognize common heritage elements in their immediate environment and thus to develop a perspective on our common heritage.” In addition, the “Historical Empathy” skill is included in the section “Relationships Between Skills” of the same unit.

In the heading “Learning Outcomes and Process Components” of the learning area of the program, the following statements are included in the section “can bring out a product reflecting family history”: “can make inferences based on the sources obtained regarding family history” and “can offer a product reflecting his/her opinion using the information in the sources obtained regarding family history.” In addition, the following statements are included in the heading “can interpret the importance of recognizing common heritage elements in their immediate environment”: “can examine common heritage elements in their immediate environment” and “can express the information obtained regarding common heritage elements in their immediate environment in his/her own words.”

The “Content Framework” section of the learning area of the program focuses on the subject of “Family history”. Similarly, in the section “Learning-Teaching Practices”, it is recommended that “a text reflecting family history be read or visuals be presented to draw attention to family history.

Students should not be asked to carry out a study that will reflect their own family history chronologically. It is emphasized that we need evidence to be able to reveal family history. Brainstorming is done on which elements can be evidence in family history studies.” In order for students to do their own family history studies, they are asked to interview the elderly in the family and bring family history-related items (photographs, letters, old clothes, diplomas, report cards, etc.) to the classroom. A class exhibition is arranged with the items students bring to school. In this exhibition, they are expected to present the items reflecting their family history to their friends through the introduction cards they have prepared. With this study, they are helped to realize that the elements of family history are also our common heritage. The work students in the process can be evaluated using a holistic graded scoring key.”

In the section “Field Skills” of the learning area called “Technology and Social Sciences” in Grade 4, the concepts of “Historical Empathy” and “Historical Contextualization” are emphasized. Similarly, in the section Learning-Teaching Practices, the statement “students are given written and visual resources regarding the cultural characteristics of our country, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and different countries” is included, and it is stated that “in this context, the similarities between us and the TRNC are addressed in terms of historical and cultural ties. What requires people with different cultural characteristics to come together is questioned through case studies (SDB2.3)”.

In the “Bridging” step of the heading “Learning-Teaching Experiences” of the unit “Our Home is the World” of the 5th Grade learning area, the following statement is included: “Attention is drawn to the fact that our cities have many similar and different features in terms of their natural and historical attractions, locations, economic and transportation conditions.” It is also stated that “examples from history are given about respecting symbols of independence and students are asked about their opinions on these examples.” In addition, in the section “Learning-Teaching Practices”, “students are asked to determine the relative location characteristics of the province they live in by examining examples in written and visual sources (OB1, OB4). Digital resources can also be used for this purpose (OB2). Students are asked to give examples of the main landforms, water resources, neighbors, and important historical sites of the province they live in based on the given resources. In this context, the importance of protecting the natural and historical attractions of the province they live in is emphasized.” In addition, “Students are asked to give examples of the main landforms, water resources, neighbors, and important historical sites of the province they live in based on the given resources. In this context, the importance of protecting the natural and historical beauties of the province in which they live is emphasized” was stated. However, in the same unit of the program, it says “students examine the changes that have occurred in the natural and human environment in the province they live in from the past to the

present through photographs, pictures, newspaper reports, aerial photographs, city maps, city plans, history interviews and determine the factors that cause change”.

The subheading “learning-teaching practices” of the 6th Grade “Living Together” learning area includes the following statements: “Students are asked to present the groups they are involved in and the changes in their roles in these groups over time, taking their rights and responsibilities into consideration, with an explanatory timeline.” In addition, the subheading “Enrichment” of the section “Differentiation” includes the following statements: “Students may be asked to examine the biography of an exemplary person or a scientist who represents our national and spiritual values in our history and determine the groups this person was involved in throughout his life and his roles in these groups.”

The following statements are included in the subheading “learning-teaching practices” of the 6th Grade learning area “Our Home is the World” learning area; “The Turkish World Map is examined from the given visual or digital resources, allowing students to have an idea about the vast geography where Turkish culture prevails. The cultural collaborations of our country with Turkish states and communities are examined by using the given written and visual resources (Turkish States Organization, Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, Yunus Emre Institute, Organization of Turks Abroad and Related Communities). The nations and important events with which Turks established “cultural and emotional ties” and provided mutual support throughout the historical process can be examined and newspaper news about these ties can be examined.

The subheading “teaching-learning practices” of the 7th Grade “Technology and Social Sciences” learning area includes the statement “students are provided with introductory information on different social science branches (archaeology, geography, economics, philosophy, law, sociology, history) through sample texts. At this stage, the technique ‘talking circle’ can be used. Students are provided with the definition of the relevant discipline based on their fields of study. This process can be evaluated with a checklist, observation form, and anecdote record. Students are asked to determine the common characteristics of social science branches (history, geography, archaeology, law, economics, philosophy, and sociology) by examining the given sample texts. They are asked to determine the different characteristics of social science branches (archaeology, geography, economics, philosophy, law, sociology, history) by continuing to examine the same sources. Students are asked to explain the common characteristics and differences they have specified to the whole class through the “circle discussion” practice. In this process, students have the opportunity to evaluate the information they have acquired with a critical perspective while determining the common and different characteristics of social sciences.”

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is observed that the basic approach and special objectives of the Social Studies Curriculum touch upon history and culture. In this context, conceptual skills, field skills, social and emotional learning skills, literacy skills, and tendencies are defined as the objectives that students should attain. Similar to the 2018 Curriculum, in the 2024 program, history topics are presented within the values pillar, while the skills indicate what kind of process is to be followed. In this context, as emphasized in some studies (Mammadli, 2020), the implementation of new forms and methods in history education is mandatory. In history classes, students can acquire national and moral values by learning the lives of noteworthy heroes. In the Social Studies Curriculum within the scope of the 2024 Education Model, history topics encourage students to be inspired by the past and provide them with opportunities to empathize. In this context, the Social Studies Course Curriculum, prepared on the basis of the “General Purposes and Basic Principles of Turkish National Education” expressed in the Basic Law of National Education, outlined the characters that students will have, and a basic road map was drawn in this regard in the 2024 program.

The learning outcomes in the 9th program of the Principles Regarding the Implementation of the Social Studies Curriculum were prepared based on the skills and related process components in the Türkiye Century Education Model. In this context, “historical empathy” was rephrased as “developing a perspective” while “synthesizing” was rephrased as “bringing out an original product”. In the content of the program, the main objective was to emphasize historical characters who stand out with their thoughts, actions, personality traits and works, and to avoid memorization while analyzing biographies of historical characters in the education processes. In some studies on this subject (Aydın, 2020; Karabağ, 2003; Borke, 1971; Yeager and Foster, 2001), the use of historical empathy technique in social studies courses is important in that it allows students to evaluate the plot considering the conditions of the day. It was observed that the concepts of “Historical Empathy” and “Historical Contextualization” were emphasized in the “Field Skills” section of the 4th Grade learning area “Technology and Social Sciences” learning area.

In the “Bridging” step of the heading “Learning-Teaching Experiences” of the unit “Our Home is the World” of the 5th grade 2nd learning area of the program, the following statement is included: “Attention is drawn to the fact that our cities have many similar and different features in terms of their natural and historical attractions, places, financial and transportation conditions.” According to some studies on this subject (Yeşilbursa, 2008), “teaching history subjects has a special place in arousing national consciousness. Considering the problems related to teaching of history, new teaching methods are needed to make history

subjects more educational and enjoyable for students. The method of teaching during visits to historical places is also a student-centered method that encourages students to research and think.”

In the subheading “Learning-Teaching Practices” of the 6th Grade “Living Together” learning area, the following statements are included: “Students are asked to present the groups they are a part of and the changes in their roles in these groups over time, their rights and responsibilities, with an explanatory history line.” Studies (Aktın, Karaçalı Taze, 2023; Pala and Şimşek, 2016) reveal that the use of materials is especially important in learning, and that materials such as timelines are especially important in gaining the skill of learning chronology. The following statements are included in the heading “Learning-Teaching Practices” of the “Our Home is the World” learning area of the same class; “By examining the Turkish World Map from the given visual or digital sources, students are given an idea about the vast geography where Turkish culture lives”. Accordingly, enriching education processes using the technology of the time is considered to be a factor that boosts success. There are many studies on this subject (Eskici and Altun, 2023; Yeşilorman and Koç, 2014; Yalçın, 2022).

Given all these, while teaching social studies, which has the reflex of helping to be effective, sensitive and responsible citizens, it may be beneficial for history topics to be free from abstraction and to be studied concretely, and enrich the process by taking the age categories of the students into account.

Modern measures should be taken to make history a discipline that students are curious about. For this, different teaching strategies, methods and techniques should be used in the study of the topics, and the process should be enriched with examples from the lives of model figures in history.

Students should be motivated using the most effective and up-to-date technological elements of the time and given the opportunity to become the builders of their own learning.

Old education models should not be completely ignored, education models prepared in line with novelties should be equipped with contemporary strategies, methods and techniques. In this way, educating students through effective materials can contribute more to the sustainability of their knowledge.

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