

An Analysis of the Units “I’m Learning my Past” and “The Place where We Live” in the Social Studies Textbook Related to Critical Thinking Standards

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Suggested Citation:

Aybek, B., & Aslan, S. (2016). An analysis of the units “I’m learning my past” and “the place where we live” in the social studies textbook related to critical thinking standards. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 65, 35-54
10.14689/ejer.2016.65.03

Abstract

Problem Statement: Various research have been conducted investigating the quality and quantity of textbooks such as wording, content, design, visuality, physical properties, activities, methods and techniques, questions and experiments, events, misconceptions, organizations, pictures, text selection, end of unit questions and assessments, indexes and glossaries, scientific content, readability, suitability for the target age group, and the opinions of teachers and students about specific textbooks. A literature review identified that no research has been carried out on social studies textbooks that has analyzed these textbooks in accordance with the standards of critical thinking. Therefore it was determined that such a study needed to be performed. With this study, it is thought that the standards of critical thinking should be considered when preparing textbooks in order to draw the attention of the authors so that the quality of textbooks will increase.

Purpose of the Study: The aim of the current study is to analyze the units “I am learning my past and the place where we live” in the primary education fourth grade social studies textbook, in accordance with the standards of critical thinking.

Method: A qualitative research model was used in the study. Data was collected through document analysis. Themes were formed within the framework of critical thinking standards (i.e., clarity, accuracy, significance/relevance, sufficiency, breadth/depth, precision) regarding

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the social studies textbook. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data.

Findings and Conclusion: According to the findings, the activities in the textbook meet critical thinking standards of clarity, accuracy, significance/relevance, sufficiency standards at a high rate, and partially meet the standards for breadth/depth and precision.

Recommendations: Arranging the activities in social studies textbooks so as to develop critical thinking skills will contribute to the development of higher level thinking skills of the students, which is one of the main objectives of education. The quality of education will improve provided that social studies textbooks are prepared according to the standards of critical thinking. Textbooks should be meticulously prepared by publishers. The preparation of social studies textbooks not only by the experts but also by other experts(e.g., program development specialist, field specialists from university, branch teachers, educational psychologists, etc.) to facilitate student acquisition of critical thinking skills within the context of modern education mentality along with performing pilot scheme will contribute to the improvement and advance in education.

Keywords: Elementary school, education, thinking, critical thinking

Introduction

In today's world of rapid globalization and decentralization, communities need trained and qualified manpower in areas such as science and technology. The training of qualified manpower is possible with quality education (Fullan, 1991). Quality education is defined as teaching and learning studies which are performed in a convenient and conducive environment by informed and motivated students who take the needs and priorities of country, society, and individuals into account, who are aware of the need for participating in education and training activities with well-trained teachers within the framework of training programs that have been created by taking the available human resources and physical conditions into consideration(Dinc&Dogan,2010). With the aim of achieving quality education, countries are required to update their curriculum in consideration of recent social, scientific, and technological developments. Indeed, in recent years, developed and developing countries have amended their curricula by taking into account these developments.

In Turkey, a student-centered approach that uses the constructivist approach was adopted in the 2005-2006 academic year. Thus, social studies curriculum was amended with this approach. The new social studies curriculum aims to implement a new approach that is student-centered and thus activity-centered, and which balances knowledge and skills and provides students opportunities for interacting with their environment by taking into account their own lives and individual

differences. In line with this new approach, the social studies curriculum has been designed with the aim of accepting that each student is an unique individual, and showing sensitivity to the development of the qualities expected from students by shedding light on their future life. It aims to keep the realization of “learning for the sake of learning” in the forefront by ensuring the development of the learner’s knowledge, concepts, values, and skills, encouraging students to think, ask questions and to exchange opinions, and attaching importance to the adoption of universal values by focusing on national identity. Moreover, it has been also designed to foster the development of individuals who are both aware of their rights and who fulfill their responsibilities. It also accounts for a diversity of teaching-learning methods and techniques that appeal to all students. Finally, it evaluates these learning and teaching processes by periodically inspecting student’s work files (Akdeniz & Kapicioglu, 2011).

In 2005, primary education social studies curriculum was arranged according to the constructivist approach and higher-order thinking skills. Critical thinking is one of these higher-order thinking skills, and is one skill that the social studies curriculum aims to foster. Critical thinking has been defined in different ways by different scientists. Critical thinking generally requires higher-level thinking in that it requires synthesis and evaluation more than application or analysis (Moore,2001). According to Grant (1988), critical thinking is involved as thinking processes or forms such as general reasoning, logical thinking, higher-level thinking, acting wisely and creative thinking. Paul and Elder (2007) define critical thinking as the art of analyzing and evaluating thinking with a view to improving it. In addition, critical thinking is a skill that provides students the opportunity to put what they already know into practice, and to refresh their prior learning by esteeming their own thoughts. Critical thinking is not only composed of mental processes but also covers skills, trends, academic achievement, reading and habits (Facione,1990; Halpern,1996; Maltepe, 2016; Paul et al.1990; Norris,1985; Tunca,2015).Individual differences in the learning mental skills and complex opinions that are necessary for developing a realistic and objective worldview and different views highlight that one of the main objectives of the training programs is critical thinking. Critical thinking is supposed to be at the heart of education and training systems (Sahinel,2002).

According to Ozdemir (2006), critical thinking helps to ensure the development of new solutions, thus questioning whether the evidence is sufficient. According to Beyer (1988), individuals who have critical thinking skills can clearly express an issue or a problem and they do not act without thinking; in addition they control their studies and are willing to create new ideas. They search and offer reasons and evidence for their claims, and they tend to remain doubtful until sufficient evidence has been found. These skills are regarded as a major objective of Social Studies, which is the school subject that most prepares individuals for life. In this regard, critical thinking skills in social studies lessons are of great importance. Education System of Turkish required that social studies textbooks prepare students to acquire critical thinking skills by improving critical thinking in social studies lessons.

Textbooks are complementary teaching materials that offer courses within teaching programs in a structured way and explain them on a regular basis. They guide students about the course objectives and are essential tools for the educational process (Unsal&Gunes,2004).Textbooks are the most common and easily accessible training materials around the world. Textbooks are also considered a training program for teachers, even as they constitute a source of knowledge for students. In addition, textbooks have a significant function as they reflect curriculum to the classroom. As such, the preparation of textbooks is one way to encourage students to think will contribute to the quality of education. Thus it has become critical to emphasize critical thinking in textbooks and to prepare textbook content so that it develops critical thinking (Ozturk&Razgatlioglu,2013). Preparing textbook of social studies learning activities so that they are in compliance with critical thinking training will enable students to acquire critical thinking skills. Pursuant to a new social studies curriculum whose aim is to educate individuals to possess critical thinking skills, the preparation of textbooks so that they meet the standards of critical thinking should improve the suitability and the quality of these textbooks.

Various research have been conducted investigating the quality and quantity of textbooks such as wording, content, design, visuality, physical properties, activities, methods and techniques, questions and experiments, events, misconceptions, organizations, pictures, text selection, end of unit questions and assessments, indexes and glossaries, scientific content, readability, suitability for the target age group, and the opinions of teachers and students about specific textbooks (Aybek et al.2014;Bakar et al.2009;Cecen et al.2016;Gecit&Ozen,2011; Gunes et al.2016; Karadas et al.2012; Kirbaslar&Ince,2010;Kosker&Akoz, 2011).A literature review identified that no research has been carried out on social studies textbooks that has analyzed these textbooks in accordance with the standards of critical thinking. Therefore it was determined that such a study needed to be performed. With this study, it is thought that the standards of critical thinking should be considered when preparing textbooks in order to draw the attention of the authors so that the quality of textbooks will increase.

Aim

The aim of the current study is to analyze the units "I am learning my past and the place where we live" in the primary education fourth grade social studies textbook to examine whether or not it meets critical thinking standards, including clarity, accuracy, significance/ relevance, sufficiency, breadth/depth, and precision, as presented by Nosich (2012).

Method

Research Design

Qualitative research model was used to examine the units "I am learning my past and the place where we live" that are available in primary education fourth grade

social studies textbook, in accordance with the standards of critical thinking presented by Nosich (2012).

Research Sample

The study population consisted of fourth-class social studies textbooks. The fourth grade social studies textbook put out Tuna Publishing (Tuysuz, 2013) constituted the study sample. This book was selected because it was accepted by the Board of Education and used throughout Turkey in the 2013-2014 academic year.

Research Instrument and Data Analysis

Data was collected using document review, which is a qualitative research method. Document review analyzes written materials that contain knowledge about case reports or targeted case investigation (Yildirim&Simsek,2011).It is a review process by which the records and documents related to a study are collected and coded according to a certain system (Karasar,2012).In this study, the units "I am learning my past and the place where we live" were analyzed in terms of critical thinking standards which was put forward by Nosich (2012). Yildirim and Simsek (2011) stated that document review consists of five phases. These are:

1. *Access to the Document:* In this phase, the researcher accesses the appropriate documents by identifying which ones will fit the research aim. In this study, a primary education fourth grade social studies textbook was identified and the appropriate book was found.

2. *Checking Authenticity:* The authenticity of the accessible documents should be checked, since the reliability of the research is damaged if documents are used without checking their authenticity. In this study, an original copy of the fourth grade social studies textbook was obtained; the second researcher in this study serves as a fourth grade teacher, which ensures the reliability of the research.

3. *Understanding the Documents:* In the third phase, the obtained documents must be correctly understood and resolved. The obtained documents should be examined within a particular system. In this study, the textbook units that were used as a part of the study were comparatively analyzed in terms of critical thinking standards. Thus, critical thinking standards were explained one by researchers and which standard should have which feature was explained.

4. *Data Analysis:* Descriptive analysis was used to explain the compliance of the units "I am learning my past and the place where we live" with the standards of critical thinking. According to Yildirim and Simsek (2011), descriptive analysis is made with the aim of presenting findings to the reader in a well organized manner. In descriptive analysis, the obtained data can be summarized and interpreted based upon predetermined themes. In this study, the obtained findings were arranged and interpreted depending on the themes within the context of previously defined standards of critical thinking. Throughout the study, the activities in the textbook were analyzed to evaluate which ones were appropriate for critical thinking standards. Results are shown in the tables. A plus sign (+) indicates that critical

thinking standards were met, whereas a negative sign (-) indicates that critical thinking standards were not met.

Reliability and validity are the two most important criteria used for ensuring or increasing the credibility of a study's results. "The fact that the collected data are reported in detail and the researcher explains how to get the results is among the most important criteria of the validity in a qualitative research (Yildirim&Simsek,2011).In the study, data collection and analysis process were analyzed in a detailed way with a view to ensuring the validity of the research results. The researchers separately examined the textbook and came to consensus as to whether the activities in the textbook appropriately met critical thinking standards (Silverman,2005).In case of disagreement, determination was conducted by researchers. One of the approaches for ensuring reliability is the analysis of the research by an expert, where researchers present their study to an expert for examination and the expert gives feedback by checking the analysis, findings, and results of the study(Merriam,1998).In this study, two social studies teachers reviewed the study. As a result of examination, the teachers expressed that the analysis, findings, interpretations, and results were appropriate.

5. *Data Report*: At the fifth phase, the results should be reported. In this study, the obtained results were also reported.

Results

The standards of critical thinking put forward by Nosich (2012) are explained below. Whether or not the units "I'm learning my past and the place where we live" meet these standards was clarified through examples.

Clarity

The criteria for the standard of "clarity" are given below, as are the results that indicate whether or not these criteria were covered in the units is presented in Table 1. A plus sign (+) indicates that it covers the criteria whereas a minus (-) sign indicates that the criteria was not covered.

The language used in the book was found to be appropriate for the level of fourth-grade students. The definitions of some of the concepts in the units (e.g., natural disasters, weather, directions, etc.) are provided, yet other concepts (e.g., national culture, republic, war, leadership and so on) are not explained. The questions that the activities ask of students and the activity instructions are written in a clear and understandable manner. Most of the activities are written in such a simple way that students can understand them clearly. However, some activities are described in a much more detailed way. For instance, the knowledge available in the unit "Traditions from past to present" on page 44 has plenty of detail and covers the previous activities. In contrast, the activities of the units called "Let's see and draw nature in our culture" should be described in detail, yet no detail is given. It is evident that examples are given and visuals are used with the aim of concretizing the

statements. The visuals used are suitable for the activities. The activities are appropriate for the level of the students, and they are written in a manner that can be easily understood by the students. Because the units "I'm learning my past and the place where we live" reflect most of the criteria of the clarity standard, these units meet clarity at a high rate.

Table 1.

Findings Related to the Standard of Clarity

<i>The standard of clarity</i>	<i>I'm learning my past</i>					<i>The place where we live</i>				
	<i>The history of family</i>	<i>The elements of national culture</i>	<i>Our games from past to present</i>	<i>Ataturk and national struggle</i>	<i>Directions</i>	<i>Let's see and draw</i>	<i>Weather forecast</i>	<i>What about the environment?</i>	<i>Nature in our culture</i>	<i>Get ready against natural disasters</i>
It is written explicitly	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
It is easily understood	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Concepts are explained	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	+	-	+
It is plain	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
It is described in detail	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+
It is concretized through examples	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
It is supported with visuals	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
It is appropriately expressed to the target group	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Accuracy

The criteria for the standard "accuracy" are given below, as are the results that indicate whether or not these criteria are covered in the units (Table 2).

Table 2.

Findings Related to the Standard of Accuracy

<i>The standard of accuracy</i>	<i>I'm learning my past</i>					<i>The place where we live</i>				
	<i>The history of family</i>	<i>The elements of national culture</i>	<i>Our games from past to present</i>	<i>Ataturk and national struggle</i>	<i>Directions</i>	<i>Let's see and draw</i>	<i>Weather forecast</i>	<i>What about the environment?</i>	<i>Natura in our culture</i>	<i>Get ready against natural disasters</i>
Knowledge presented is correct	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Knowledge is given in the correct sequence	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Examples are in line with the topic	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
There is cause and effect relationship	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	+
Knowledge presented is based upon reliable sources	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-

The knowledge presented in the "I'm learning my past and the place where we live" is generally correct. Most of the knowledge in the units is given in the correct sequence. To illustrate, the section that describes Ataturk and the National Struggle and War of Independence is arranged chronologically. Nevertheless, in the activity "Games from past to present" that occurs between pages 48 and 51, knowledge about games played in the past is provided but no knowledge is presented about the games played today. Relevant examples are given that relate to all the activities of the units. While some of the activities of the units demonstrate a cause-effect relationship, some of them do not. For example, in the activity "Ataturk and the National Struggle," it is stated that the National Struggle was initiated on the basis of the occupation of Turkey, whereas in the activity "Directions" (pages 66-69) no cause-and-effect relationship is established about the reason why National Struggle has existed and why it is important for human life and how it facilitates the lives of humans. In the activities relevant to units "Games from past to present and Ataturk and the National Struggle," resources are given, however in other activities no resources are presented. In conclusion, the units "I'm learning my past and the place where we live" reflect most of the criteria of the accuracy standard. Therefore, these units meet the accuracy standard at a high rate.

Significance/Relevance

In Table 3, the criteria for the standard of “accuracy” are given, and the results of whether or not these criteria were covered in the units were presented.

Table 3.*Findings Related to the Standard of Significance/Relevance*

<i>The standard of significance /relevance</i>	<i>I'm learning my past</i>					<i>The place where we live</i>				
	<i>The history of family</i>	<i>The elements of national culture</i>	<i>Our games from past to present</i>	<i>Ataturk and national struggle</i>	<i>Directions</i>	<i>Let's see and draw</i>	<i>Weather forecast</i>	<i>What about the environment?</i>	<i>Natura in our culture</i>	<i>Get ready against natural disasters</i>
It has a significant role in students' daily life	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Main and sub-topics are separated	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Important points are emphasized	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+
There is a connection between topics	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Fundamental and dominant concepts are evident	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Analysis of the "I'm learning my past and the place where we live" units shows that in terms of the standard of significance /relevance, the topics of these units are necessary for the students' daily lives. In addition, the topics in the book are divided into main topics and sub-topics. For example, the Ataturk and the National Struggle activity (pages 52-59) and the Directions activity (pages 66-69) are separated from each other as the main and sub-headings. While some issues are paid greater attention, others are paid less. For instance, the activity “The history of family” has more detailed knowledge, but the “Let's see and draw” on pages 70 and 71 has less knowledge that is included. Some concepts present in the units have become more pronounced and they are written in bold compared to the other ones. Moreover, significant concepts are put in the boxes and shown in different colors. Important topics are supported with pictures. The units "I'm learning my past and the place where we live" meet the significance/relevance standard at a high rate.

Sufficiency

In Table 4, the criteria for the standard “sufficiency” are given, and the results of whether or not these criteria are covered in the units are presented.

Table 4.*Findings Related to the Standard of Sufficiency*

<i>The standard of sufficiency</i>	<i>I'm learning my past</i>					<i>The place where we live</i>				
	<i>The history of family</i>	<i>The elements of national culture</i>	<i>Our games from past to present</i>	<i>Ataturk and national struggle</i>	<i>Directions</i>	<i>Let's see and draw</i>	<i>Weather forecast</i>	<i>What about the environment?</i>	<i>Natura in our culture</i>	<i>Get ready against natural disasters</i>
Knowledge relevant to the topic is sufficient	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
It includes enough activities	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Enough evidence is presented	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
The topic is viewed from many angles	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Time is enough	-	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+

The "I'm learning my past and the place where we live" units demonstrate sufficient knowledge to facilitate student achievement of the acquisitions. Some units include unnecessary and too much knowledge. Activities such as the history of family (pages 36-41), our national culture (pages 42-47), and Ataturk and the National Struggle (pages 52-61) all contain knowledge that is both too detailed and too much, which leads to confusion among students. Including too many activities and unnecessary knowledge is not considered sufficient but rather excessive. The units "I'm learning my past and the place where we live" were found to meet the sufficiency standard at a high rate.

Breadth/Depth

In Table 5, the criteria for the standard “breadth/depth” are given, and the results for whether or not these criteria are covered in the units are presented.

Table 5.*Findings Related to the Standard of Breadth/Depth*

<i>The standard of breadth/ depth</i>	<i>I'm learning my past</i>					<i>The place where we live</i>				
	<i>The history of family</i>	<i>The elements of national culture</i>	<i>Our games from past to present</i>	<i>Ataturk and national struggle</i>	<i>Directions</i>	<i>Let's see and draw</i>	<i>Weather forecast</i>	<i>What about the environment?</i>	<i>Nature in our culture</i>	<i>Get ready against natural disasters</i>
Topics are explained to the finest detail	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+
Wide knowledge is presented related to the topics	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	+
Topics are discussed extensively	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+
Different perspectives are available	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

In "I'm learning my past and the place where we live" units, various explanations are made that relate to the activities. Topics are considered enough during the writing process of the books. In most of the activities, topics are explained to the finest detail, however, the activities "Let's see and draw and nature in our culture" are not explained in detail. In-depth knowledge regarding the topics is given in most of the activities. However, in the activity called "Games from past to present," in-depth knowledge about the games which are played at the present time is not presented. Similarly, in such activities as "Let's see and draw" (pages 70-71) and "Nature in our culture" (pages 80-83), no in-depth knowledge is given. The activities available in the units do not have different perspectives. The units "I'm learning my past and the place where we live" partially meet the criteria of the breadth/ depth standard.

Precision

In Table 6, the criteria for the standard "precision" are given, and the results of whether or not these criteria are covered in the units are presented.

Table 6.*Findings Related to the Standard of Precision*

<i>The standard of precision</i>	<i>I'm learning my past</i>					<i>The place where we live</i>				
	<i>The history of family</i>	<i>The elements of national culture</i>	<i>Our games from past to present</i>	<i>Ataturk and national struggle</i>	<i>Directions</i>	<i>Let's see and draw</i>	<i>Weather forecast</i>	<i>What about the environment?</i>	<i>Natura in our culture</i>	<i>Get ready against natural disasters</i>
It is accurate	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
It is detailed enough	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	-	+
Activities are associated with acquisitions	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
The causes of events are explained	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+
Results include precision	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Analysis of "I'm learning my past and the place where we live" units revealed some errors. Examples of these errors are given below the standard of accuracy and clarity. The presence of knowledge errors is inconsistent with the standard of precision. Most of the unit has sufficient detail, except for a few topics (please see the examples from the breadth/depth standard results section). The fact that the activities belonging to the unit contain accurate knowledge and causes and results of the events are specified is indispensable for the precision standard. Some statements that refer to precision are used in the activities. The activities were associated with knowledge acquisition, but more activities are presented related to some acquisitions, while few activities have been associated with some acquisitions. The units "I'm learning my past and the place where we live" meet some of the criteria of precision standard, and thus these units partially meet the precision standard.

Discussion and Conclusion

Assessing the results associated with the clarity standard, it was clear that the unit meets this standard at a high rate. The questions asked to the students and the instruction activities are written in a way that is clear and understandable and most of the activities are simple; in addition they are appropriate for the level of the students and facilitate their understanding of the activities. In the study conducted by Aybek et al. (2014) and Tas (2007), teachers also stated that textbooks are written in clear and understandable manner. In contrast, some activities had too many

details. This would cause students to be bored while reading the activities. Various examples and visuals are presented in order to concretize the expressions in the textbook and the visuals are in accordance with the activities. The study carried out by Ceken (2011) shows that when the visuals are presented incorrectly or no visuals are provided, they will negatively affect learning. In this regard, that the visuals in the textbooks are provided in accordance with the activities and can thus have a positive impact upon student learning.

Evaluating the accuracy standard's results, knowledge in relation to the units is generally judged to be valid. It is highly significant for social studies textbooks to allow students to recognize and understand the social environment, introduce customs and traditions, and provide knowledge about the past that includes complete and accurate knowledge. That these textbooks contain incorrect knowledge may result in students incorrectly learning some concepts. A study by Yukselir (2006) found that the definitions and properties of the concepts taught to students in social studies should be explained by using suitable examples. A cause-effect relationship was observed in some of the activities in the units but in others there was no cause-effect relationship. This may lead to a lack of learning of how to establish cause-effect relationship between events, which is one of the most important principles of social studies. This lack of emphasis on cause-effect relationships is a major shortcoming of the textbook.

The results for the standard of significance/relevance showed that the topics available in the textbook are extremely important for the student's daily lives. Social studies should be intertwined with daily life, as they are very important for socializing students to become individuals who are aware of current issues and who live without detaching themselves from society. Social studies intends to educate citizens so that they are sensitive to what is happening around them, are responsible, and are willing to produce solutions to problems (Gedik, 2008). Therefore, current issues and knowledge that can be used in daily life should be taught in social studies.

With regards to sufficiency, the textbook is sufficient for acquiring the acquisitions. However, unnecessary and different activities were found to be available, which might mean that students do not achieve the required acquisitions. In parallel with this finding, the study conducted by Ersoy and Rock (2009) also concluded that there were too many activities. When there are too many activities and texts are too long, there may not be enough time for students to do the activities. In a study conducted by Ozturk and Tuncel (2006), teachers also stated that performing activities takes a lot of time. Many activities in the textbook contain unnecessary knowledge, which may lead to confusion among students. Including too many activities and unnecessary knowledge is not sufficient but rather excessive, and reduces the quality of the book.

Given the results of breadth/depth standard, various explanations are made for the activities. In most of the activities, the topics are explained in a detailed way, but a small number of activities are not disclosed in a detailed manner. This finding is one of the shortcomings of the textbook. A study conducted by Akdag (2009)

revealed that the social studies textbook for seventh grade students has been prepared in a comprehensive manner. No different perspectives on the activities took place, which is considered to be a significant shortcoming of the textbook as one of the goals of social studies is to make students have different perspectives. Hence, textbooks must be prepared for achieving this goal.

With regards to the criteria for precision, some errors were found in the units. These errors are inconsistent with the standard of precision. Any textbook which meets the standard of accuracy knowledge should be accurate, sufficiently detailed, cause and effect relationships should be consistent, and they should include precision (Aybek et al. 2015). Sufficient detail was given except for a few topics (please see the breadth/depth standard for greater detail). It is indispensable for the standard of precision to contain accurate knowledge, to specify causes and results of the events. It was determined that some statements referring to precision are used in the activities of these units and they are associated with acquisitions.

Conclusion

Nowadays, education aims to train individuals in higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, to look at events from different perspectives, to acquire accurate knowledge by referring to the required resources when evaluating an event, and to use necessary evidence to support ideas. These aims are closely related to critical thinking skills, thus including the objectives of social studies. Therefore, to have students acquire critical thinking skills in social studies lessons is of great importance. Thus, social studies textbooks should be prepared to develop student's critical thinking abilities. In the current study, an analysis of the units "I'm learning my past and the place where we live" available in the fourth class social studies textbook was carried out in accordance with the standards of critical thinking. The study found that the activities in the textbook met critical thinking standards of clarity, accuracy, significance/relevance, and sufficiency standards at a high rate, and that they partially meet those of breadth/depth and precision.

Recommendations

Arranging the activities in social studies textbooks so as to develop critical thinking skills will contribute to the development of higher level thinking skills of the students, which is one of the main objectives of education. The quality of education will improve provided that social studies textbooks are prepared according to the standards of critical thinking. Textbooks should be meticulously prepared by publishers.

The preparation of social studies textbooks not only by the experts but also by other experts (e.g., program development specialist, field specialists from university, branch teachers, educational psychologists, etc.) to facilitate student acquisition of critical thinking skills within the context of modern education mentality along with performing pilot scheme will contribute to the improvement and advance in

education. Finally, the courses and textbooks, which that are implemented across the country should be meticulously scrutinized and selected by the Board of Education.

Acknowledgements

Part of this article was presented at the I. International Eurasian Educational Research Congress, 24-26/04/2014, Istanbul University, ISTANBUL.

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Sosyal Bilgiler Ders Kitabında Yer Alan “Geçmişimi Öğreniyorum ve Yaşadığımız Yer” Ünitelerinin Eleştirel Düşünme Standartları Doğrultusunda İncelenmesi

Atf:

Aybek, B., & Aslan, S. (2016). An analysis of the units “I’m learning my past” and “the place where we live” in the social studies textbook related to critical thinking standards. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 65, 35-54
10.14689/ejer.2016.65.03

Özet

Problem Durumu: Ders kitapları, öğretim programlarında yer alan konulara ait bilgileri planlı bir şekilde sunan, düzenli bir şekilde açıklayan, öğrenciyi dersin hedefleri doğrultusunda yönlendiren, eğitim sürecinin vazgeçilmez araçları olan tamamlayıcı öğretim materyalleridir. Ders kitabına yönelik yapılan çalışmalar incelendiğinde kitapların; anlatım biçimi, içerik, tasarım, görsellik, fiziksel özellikleri, içerdiği etkinlikler, kullanılan yöntem ve teknikler, içerdiği sorular ve deneyler, aktiviteler, kavram yanılgıları, organizasyonlar, resimler, metin seçimi, ünite sonu soruları ve değerlendirmeler, indeks ve ek sözlükler, bilimsel içerik, okunabilirlik, hedef yaş grubuna uygunluk, ders kitaplarına yönelik öğretmen ve öğrenci görüşleri gibi kitabın nicelik ve niteliğine yönelik pek çok araştırmanın yapıldığı görülmektedir. Alanyazın taramasında, sosyal bilgiler ders kitaplarındaki etkinliklerin eleştirel düşünme standartları doğrultusunda incelendiği herhangi bir araştırmanın yapılmadığı tespit edilmiştir. Bu nedenle böyle bir çalışmanın yapılmasına karar verilmiştir. Bu çalışma ile ders kitapları hazırlanırken eleştirel düşünme standartlarının göz önünde bulundurulması konusunda yazarların dikkatinin çekilmesi ve dolayısıyla ders kitaplarının niteliğinin artması düşünülmektedir.

Araştırmanın Amacı: Bu çalışmanın amacı, ilkökul dördüncü sınıf sosyal bilgiler ders kitabında yer alan “geçmişimi öğreniyorum ve yaşadığımız yer” ünitelerinin Nosich’in ortaya koyduğu açıklık, doğruluk, önem/alaka, yeterlilik, derinlik/genişlik, kesinlik eleştirel düşünme standartları doğrultusunda incelemektir.

Araştırmanın Yöntemi: Bu çalışmada, ilkökul dördüncü sınıf sosyal bilgiler ders kitabında yer alan “geçmişimi öğreniyorum ve yaşadığımız yer” üniteleri Nosich’in ortaya koyduğu eleştirel düşünme standartları doğrultusunda inceleyebilmek için nitel araştırma modeli kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın evrenini ilkökul dördüncü sınıf sosyal bilgiler ders kitapları oluşturmaktadır. Örneklemi ise Tuna Yayıncılığa ait dördüncü sınıf sosyal bilgiler ders kitabı oluşturmaktadır. Bu kitap, Talim Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı tarafından kabul edilip, 2013-2014 eğitim-öğretim yılında ülke genelinde kullanılıyor olmasından dolayı seçilmiştir. Bu çalışmada, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan doküman incelemesi yöntemi kullanılarak veriler toplanmıştır. Verilerin analizinde, dördüncü sınıf sosyal bilgiler ders kitabında yer

alan “geçmişimi öğreniyorum ve yaşadığımız yer” üniteleri eleştirel düşünme standartları doğrultusunda uygunluğunun incelenip var olan durumu açıklamak istenildiğinden betimsel analiz kullanılmıştır. Betimsel analizde, elde edilen veriler daha önceden belirlenen temalara göre özetlenip ve yorumlanabilir. Bu araştırmada da, elde edilen bulgular daha önceden belirlenen eleştirel düşünme standartları çerçevesinde temalara göre düzenlenmiş ve yorumlanmıştır. Araştırmada, incelenen ders kitabındaki etkinlikler eleştirel düşünme standartlarına uygun olup olmadığına tek tek bakılmıştır. Sonuçlar tablolarda gösterilmiştir. Tablolarda (+)işareti eleştirel düşünme standardının olduğunu, (-)işareti olmadığını göstermektedir.

Araştırmanın Bulguları: Elde edilen bulgulara göre ders kitabındaki etkinliklerin eleştirel düşünme standartlarından açıklık, doğruluk, önem/alaka, yeterlilik standartlarını yüksek oranda, derinlik/genişlik ve kesinlik standartlarını kısmen karşıladığı belirlenmiştir.

Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Önerileri: Açıklık standardı ile ilgili sonuçlara bakıldığında ünitelerin bu standardı yüksek oranda karşıladığı görülmüştür. Ünitelerde öğrencilere sorulan sorular ile etkinlik yönergelerinin açık ve anlaşılır bir şekilde yazıldığı, etkinliklerin çoğunun sade olduğu, öğrencilerin seviyelerine uygun bir dille yazıldığı belirlenmiştir. Bu da etkinliklerin anlaşılabilirliğini kolaylaştırmaktadır. Buna karşın, bazı etkinliklerin çok fazla ayrıntılı bir şekilde açıklandığı tespit edilmiştir. Bu da, öğrencilerin etkinlikleri okurken sıkılmalarına neden olacağını düşündürmektedir. Kitaptaki ifadelerin somutlaştırılması için örneklerin verildiği ve görsellerin kullanıldığı görülmüştür ve görsellerin etkinliklere uygun olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Doğruluk standardı ile ilgili sonuçlara bakıldığında üniteler ile ilgili olarak; verilen bilgilerin genellikle doğru olduğu görülmüştür. Öğrencilerin sosyal çevresini tanıyıp anlamasını sağlayan, çevresindeki gelenek, görenek ve adetleri tanıtan, tarih ile ilgili bilgiler veren sosyal bilgiler ders kitaplarının eksiksiz ve doğru bilgiler içermesi son derece önemlidir. Bu kitapların yanlış bilgiler içermesi, öğrencilerin kavramları yanlış öğrenmesine neden olabilir. Ünitelerdeki etkinliklerin bazılarında sebep-sonuç ilişkisi kurulurken, bazılarında kurulmadığı görülmüştür. Bu da, sosyal bilgiler dersinde en önemli ilklerden biri olan, olaylar arasında neden-sonuç ilişkisini kurmanın kazandırılmamasına neden olabilir. Bu durum, ders kitabının önemli bir eksikliği olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Önem/Alaka standardı ile ilgili sonuçlara bakıldığında üniteler ile ilgili olarak; ders kitabı içerisinde yer alan konuların öğrencilerin günlük hayatları için önem taşıdığı görülmüştür. Sosyal bilgiler dersi, günlük hayat ile iç içe olması gereken bir derstir. Öğrencilerin içinde yaşadıkları toplumdan kopmadan, güncel konulardan haberdar, bilgili birer birey olarak sosyalleşebilmesi için sosyal bilgiler dersi büyük önem taşımaktadır. Sosyal bilgiler dersi, öğrencilerin çevresinde olup bitenlere karşı duyarlı, sorumluluk sahibi, sorunlar karşısında çözüm üretmek için istekli vatandaşlar yetiştirilmesini hedefler. Bunun için de güncel olayların ve günlük hayatlarında kullanılacak bilgilerin sosyal bilgiler dersinde öğretilmesi önem arz etmektedir. Yeterlilik standardı ile ilgili sonuçlara bakıldığında üniteler ile ilgili olarak; kitapta yer alan bilgilerin kazanımları kazandırmak için yeterli olduğu görülmüştür. Ancak gereğinden fazla ve farklı etkinlik olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bu durumda, öğrencilerin etkinlik sonucunda ulaşmaları gereken kazanımlara ulaşamayacaklarını düşündürmektedir. Ünitelerde

yer alan etkinliklerle gereksiz ve oldukça fazla bilgi yer almaktadır. Bu durum öğrencilerde kafa karışıklığına neden olmaktadır. Çok fazla etkinlik ve bilginin olmasının yeterli değil, abartılı olduğu düşünülmektedir. Ayrıca bu durum kitabın kalitesini de düşürmektedir. Derinlik/Genişlik standardı ile ilgili sonuçlara bakıldığında üniteler ile ilgili olarak; kitapta yer alan çoğu etkinlikler ile ilgili açıklamaların yapıldığı görülmektedir. Ünitelerde yer alan etkinliklerin çoğunda konular en ince ayrıntısına kadar açıklanırken, az sayıda etkinlik ayrıntılı bir şekilde açıklanmamıştır. Bu bulguda, kitabın bir eksikliği olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Ünitelerde yer alan etkinlikler ile ilgili farklı bakış açılarının yer almadığı tespit edilmiştir. Bu da kitabın önemli bir eksikliği olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Çünkü sosyal bilgiler dersinin amaçlarından birisi öğrencilere farklı bakış açıları kazandırmaktır. Bunun için ders kitaplarının da bu amacı gerçekleştirmeye yönelik hazırlanması gerekmektedir. Kesinlik standardı ile ilgili sonuçlara bakıldığında üniteler ile ilgili bazı hatalara rastlanılmıştır. Bilgilerde hataların olması kesinlik standardı ile bağdaşmamaktadır. Eleştirel düşünme kesinlik standardını karşılayan her hangi bir kitapta bilgiler; hatasız, yeterince ayrıntılı, sebep ve sonuç ilişkileri tutarlı olmalı ve kesinlik içermelidir. Üniteye birkaç konu dışında yeterince ayrıntıya girilmiş, bu durumun örnekleri de derinlik/genişlik standardı altında verilmiştir. Ünitelere ait etkinliklerin doğru bilgiler içermesi, olayların sebep ve sonuçlarının belirtilmesi kesinlik standardı için vazgeçilmezdir. Bu ünitelere ait etkinliklerde kesinlik içeren ifadeler kullanıldığı, ünitelere ait etkinliklerin kazanımlarla ilişkili olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Araştırma bulgularına dayalı olarak aşağıdaki öneriler geliştirilmiştir:

1. Sosyal bilgiler ders kitapları hazırlanırken sadece konu alanı uzmanlarının değil diğer uzmanlarla birlikte(program geliştirme uzmanı, üniversiteden konu alanı uzmanı, branş öğretmeni, eğitim psikoloğu, eğitim teknolojü vb.) bir ekip çalışmasıyla, ciddi anlamda pilot uygulamalar yapılarak ve kitapların eleştirel düşünme becerisi gibi çağdaş eğitim anlayışına uygun becerileri öğrencilere kazandıracak şekilde hazırlanması eğitimin gelişip ilerlemesine katkı sağlayacaktır.
2. Talim Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı tarafından, ülke genelinde uygulanacak olan ders ve kitapları daha bir titizlikle incelenip seçilmelidir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: İlkokul, eğitim, düşünme, eleştirel düşünme.