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Skills in Social Studies Curricula in Turkey: An Examination in the Context of Socio-Cultural Interaction*

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Abstract: The aim of this study was to chronologically examine the contents of the social studies curricula implemented in Turkey in terms of skills teaching in the context of socio-cultural interaction. In the study, the social studies curricula used since 1967 were subjected to content analysis, and the skills aimed to be taught to students in the contents of these curricula were listed. These lists were examined with reference to the socio-cultural conditions of the time they were implemented. Based on the findings, it can be stated that the contents and emphasis of skills cyclically varied across different social studies curricula in Turkey. There was sometimes an individual-centred and libertarian approach adopted in the curricula, while at other times an environment was present in which strict rules were dominant and the system was emphasized rather than the individual as part of the political and social conditions of the time.

Keywords: *Intercultural sensitivity, EFL, ESL, English competence, international students.*

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Introduction

Social studies is a prominent course that emerged in the early 20th century and has been included in the curricula of many countries. The pioneer of the course has been the United states in both theory and practice, and it has been entrusted an important mission to live together with as few problems as possible due to the differences related to the socio-cultural structure of the country (Dunn, 1916). In this context, suitable contents for this mission that can also be described as a citizenship education curriculum have been presented to students within the scope of the social studies course (Wrightstone, 1935).

In parallel with the increasing influence of the United States on the rest of the world after 1990s, the process of exporting its education system and curricula to different countries as well as many other systems has speeded up. Consequently, the social studies course has become a common curriculum around the world, particularly as of the second half of the 20th century (Shafer, 1964; Morris, Clelland & Ping Ma, 1997; Mhlauli, 2012). However, differences were often observed in the emergence and teaching of this course in every country. It was formed in its original form in some countries, whereas it was implemented under different titles for some time (Dumas & Lee, 1978; Sofadekan, 2012), but then as social studies.

The development of the social studies course in Turkey goes back to 1940s. The course was first taught under different titles (Citizenship, History, Geography, and State and Society Studies) in a single-disciplinary structure, but then took the title of social studies with a more multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach. In this process, the organisation of the course also changed with its title. It was sometimes regarded as single-disciplinary and taught within the scope of different courses, while it was also involved in many social sciences in an interdisciplinary structure (Yildirim, 1996). In the 2005 elementary education curricula, the social studies course was viewed with an interdisciplinary approach, and designed with contents that cannot be clearly distinguished across different social sciences.

When we have a look at the overall structure of any instructional curricula, they are basically built on three dimensions: knowledge, skills and values. Although these dimensions are not always specified in writing, instructional curricula include these three dimensions within their contents (Oliva, 2001). In this respect, the social studies curricula involved these dimensions either under different titles or in a different way. Each of the dimensions that instructional curricula

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had been meaningful/functional in accordance with the objectives, and complimentary to the curricula, but this study focused on only the skills dimension.

Skill is defined as "an individual's ability to achieve a task based on aptitude and learning, and finalise a process in accordance with a goal" (www.tdk.gov.tr). The dictionary meaning of the concept is quite similar to its terminological meaning used in the education literature (Morris & Chan, 1997; Wellington, 1989). Although it can be defined in different ways terminologically, the primary concern that should be focused here is the ability to perform a task, or a process by means of education, which clearly reflects the use of this concept in the related literature (Kerimzadeh, Salehi, Embi, Nasri & Shojaee, 2014; Wu and Alrabah, 2014).

Since the early stages of education, skills have always been the most important objectives of this process, either systematic or not. Particularly in the ages when humans could not establish dominance against the nature, education that was delivered to new generations usually through social learning/instruction consisted of the skills necessary for children to survive in tough natural conditions (Senel, 1982). In this regard, an example that first springs to one's mind is hunting. People who hunted to struggle for life tried to equip new individuals of the society, children, with the necessary skills to perform hunting, going beyond merely providing them information about it, and as a reflection of this approach, most part of the educational process was practice-based and experiential (Murphy, 2006). Martial arts, which are educational contexts similar to hunting, were again transferred to new members by the society, and aimed to develop skills to be a good fighter (Kuken, 2003). Another type of non-formal education that emphasized skills teaching throughout the history was religious education. In both monotheistic religions and religions having different systems, the society wanted to equip children with the skills necessary to fulfill religious requirements.

An instructional curriculum in which skills teaching is of great importance is undoubtedly citizenship education. The events following the French Revolution and the modern state discourse afterwards added another dimension to state-public relationships. In this process in which the concept of individual gained significance, the state aimed to design the individuals of this new era that it defined as citizens in the way that it desired (Ustel, 2014). Political powers that aimed to impose the characteristics that they desired to all sections of the society starting from childhood attributed great importance to education, and in this respect, courses designed to provide citizenship education were added to instructional curricula.

The courses within the scope of citizenship education appeared in the curricula as social studies and/or its derivatives. It is an undeniable fact that these courses had important missions in the dimension of values, but they also included skills within citizenship education in varying amounts and quality depending on the socio-economic conditions of the period in which they were designed and implemented.

The skills that are aimed to be taught to students in the curricula are more related to the characteristics of the age than to the socio-economic conditions of the society. The information-communication revolution starting from the second half of the 20th century brought the necessity to modify the skills aimed to be taught to students in citizenship education in line with this age, which is more clearly observed in the curriculum development studies carried out after 2000s (Payne, 2002; Mutluer, 2013). It is possible to interpret this picture from another perspective. The change and transformation in the skills included in the instructional curricula in the historical process also imply a socio-cultural change in a country (Georgeoff, 1966). In this regard, it would not be surprising to see that a social studies curriculum developed in the US in early 1920s contained skills related to economy (Dawson, 1922). This is because the economical crisis experienced in those years deeply affected the world, particularly the US, caused serious traumas in the basic dynamics of social life. Similarly, the influence of the World War II can be easily seen in the instructional curricula in Europe in 1940s (Phillips, 2012). These examples can be augmented as one moves forward in the historical timeline; the national stance and the skills that citizens are assigned with against identified enemies in the Cold War period were reflected in citizenship curricula (Cristol, Michell & Gimbert, 2012). Particularly, in some European countries, citizenship curricula before, during and after the Cold War exhibited a structure that incorporated many political-social characteristics of the period (Keating, 2009; Mincu, 2009).

One of the novelties brought by the 21st century to the instructional curricula in terms of skills has been globalisation and the reflections of this concept. The rapid developments in information-communication technologies after 1950s and their effects on transport and communication have caused the world turn into a small village. Such developments that have a direct influence on human life are naturally reflected to instructional curricula, and in accordance with the novelties brought by globalisation, young citizens of the new generation have started to experience a deep shift from locality to internationality (Banks, 2008). This mental migration can be observed in issues such as environmental problems, politics and military (Bromley, Meyer, and Ramirez, 2011). Instructional curricula are not exempt from the influence of this mental process, and skills related to global citizenship can be encountered in many social studies curricula in the 21st century (Kumar, 2012; Rapoport, 2009; Hogeling, 2012).

As a result, skills constitute one of the basic structures of the social studies curricula that are designed and implemented as a citizenship education program, and the skills included in the curricula also provide important data to identify the socio-economic/political change and transformation in a country. In this respect, the social studies

curricula implemented in Turkey were examined regarding the dimension of skills, and discussions including the socio-cultural perspective were presented based on the data obtained.

Method

Research Design

The study was designed and conducted in accordance with the qualitative research method. The basic criteria considered in selecting the methodology were the research aim and objectives (Phillips, 1966). The primary aim of the study was to reveal the interaction between the skills included in the curricula, and the social change and transformation. In the data-gathering and analysis processes to be carried out to achieve this aim, the curricula were analysed, and the interaction of the data with the socio-cultural transformation were discussed. At this point, the approach of examining an issue profoundly, and without losing its multifaceted and socio-cultural entity and relationship in qualitative research was considered (Marshall & Rossman, 2006) and it was decided to conduct the present study in accordance with qualitative research principles and methods that are, in a way, accepted as the research method of interpretive philosophy. There is no doubt that a quantitative study with changes in scope and content could also be conducted regarding the aims set for this study. However, although one of the primary factors in the selection of research methodology is the research aim and objectives, the researcher's research philosophy on social and human issues and his/her methodological perspective based on this philosophy can also be effective in this process (David and Sutton, 2004). Since the author of this paper considered the use of the qualitative research method as suitable to find an answer to research questions, he adopted the qualitative research method in this study.

Data Gathering and Analysis

Documentary analysis technique was used to gather data in the study. The first curriculum on social studies in Turkey was accepted in 1968, and it has been maintained with modifications till today. The analyses included the social studies curricula (i.e. 1968, 1990, 1998 and 2005) implemented as of 1968, and the curricula for the 1948 Citizenship and 1962 State and Society Studies courses.

Within the qualitative research methodology, there are many different document analysis techniques (Peräkylä & Ruusuvaori, 2013). Although there are different approaches to the classification of these techniques in the literature, it can be indicated that they are generally built on two basic structures: descriptive and interpretive. Within the scope of documentary analysis, content analysis based on an interpretive structure was employed in this study (Shapiro & Markoff, 1997). The skills were listed in the contents of only one of the curricula examined (i.e. 2005), and no information was available in the rest of the curricula regarding the skills to be taught to students. The curricula that did not provide a skills list in their curricula were subjected to interpretive content analysis, and inferences about the skills students would be taught were made through an analysis of the curriculum components (aims, contents, outcomes, etc.). Therefore, it can be indicated that the skill codes were revealed from the curricula examined in the study. This is because one of the most important steps of data analysis in qualitative studies is the researcher's reading and interpreting the text during the coding process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). A similar process was followed here, and the skills were coded by accepting the curricula as interview transcripts. The analysis process was carried out by two researchers independently, and the data obtained were compared to enhance reliability that is a significant dimension in content analysis (Gomn, 2008). After the comparison, the codes that were the same or very similar to each other were left as they were, but those that were different, if any, were re-examined. Finally, the two researchers reached an agreement on the codes, and the analysis process was completed. Making sense of the data obtained through qualitative data analysis, particularly document analysis, based on socio-cultural aspects and the topic is a notable practice in terms of the integrity of the topic (Hodder, 2002), and in this study, the contextual discussion of the data is presented in the findings and discussion sections.

Findings

1- 1948 Citizenship Course Curriculum

The Citizenship course in the 1948 elementary education curriculum was examined in terms of explanations, objectives and outcomes, and as a result of the analysis, the skills shown in Table 1 were found to be included in the curriculum.

Table1. Skills Included in the 1948 Citizenship Course Curriculum

Working in a disciplined way	Showing empathy
Critical Thinking	Conscious Consumerism
Using Visual Materials	Making Inferences

With regard to the skills aimed to be taught to students in the *Citizenship* course, the first aspect that attracted attention was the limited number of skills. Only six skills were to be taught to students during a whole school year. Two

of these skills focused on thinking, another two on being disciplined and responsible, one skill on showing empathy, and another skill on using visual materials.

2- 1962 State and Society Studies Course Curriculum

In 1962, a draft elementary education curriculum was published, and in this curriculum, a course titled *State and Society Studies* was included. Within the scope of this course, which, in a way, fulfilled the function of the social studies course, the skills aimed to be taught to students are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Skills Included in the 1962 State and Society Studies Course Curriculum

Using a map	Comprehending time
Chronology	Working in a disciplined way
Reasoning	Observation

The skills included in the curriculum were mostly related to history and geography, which is consistent with the multidisciplinary structure of the course *State and Society Studies*. Besides, the skill of working in a disciplined way was maintained in the 1962 curriculum as it was in the 1948 curriculum.

3- 1968 Social Studies Course Curriculum

In the Turkish education system, the first course titled *Social Studies* was included in the 1968 elementary education curriculum. The course which was designed as *State and Society Studies* in the 1962 draft curriculum and taught with this title for six years took the title *Social Studies* with a set of changes in content and structure that was to be taught for five class hours in 4th grade, and four class hours in 5th grade in the 1968 curriculum. The skills included in the 1968 elementary *Social Studies* course are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Skills Included in the 1968 Social Studies Course Curriculum

Cooperative Learning	Conscious Consumerism
Democratic Life	Reasoning
Decision-making	Working in a Disciplined Way
Space Perception	Time Perception
Cause-Effect	Chronology
Reading and Using a Map	Working in a Planned Way
Research	Observation

Based on the list of skills presented in Table 3, it can be stated that the 1968 *Social Studies* curriculum had broader and more comprehensive skills than the previous curricula did. Whereas the basic structure of the 1948 and 1962 curricula was based on the skills related to *history* and *geography*, the 1968 *Social Studies* curriculum additionally included various skills that democratic and participating individuals have, and reflected the basic dynamics of student-centred approach. Democratic life, cooperative learning and decision-making skills were the primary skills in this regard, and were not addressed in the previous curricula. Besides, as was the case in the two previous curricula, the skill of working in a planned and disciplined way was also emphasized in the 1968 curriculum.

4- 1990 Social Studies Course Curriculum

The 1968 elementary education curriculum was used until 1980, and in the aftermath of the 1980 Turkish coup d'état, the education system along with the whole socio-economic balance and structure of the country were exposed to fundamental changes. While the *Social Studies* course was taught in the 1968 curriculum as an integrated course, the new government that came into power after the coup returned to the single-disciplined curriculum by excluding the integrated course, and brought a new set of courses, particularly the courses such as *National History* and *National Geography*. After this was implemented for five years (1985-1990), there was again a transition to a multidisciplinary course structure for social studies.

The data regarding the skills included in the 1990 social studies curriculum are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Skills Included in the 1990 Social Studies Course Curriculum

Being Hard-working	Doing Research	Conducting Analysis	Working together	Reading and Using a Map	Making Inferences
Being Thrifty	Working in a Planned Way	Chronology			

The skills in Table 4 show similarities to those in the 1962 and 1968 curricula. Whereas the objective of making students individuals who are hard-working, thrifty and planned was maintained, the skills belonging to the basic courses, *History* and *Geography*, that formed the *Social Studies* course were also included in these curricula.

5- 1998 Social Studies Course Curriculum

In 1997, it was decided to re-examine and update the instructional curricula for the conditions and requirements of the time in accordance with the philosophy of curriculum development studies. Within the scope of this decision, various modifications, although not extensive, were made in the 1990 *Social Studies* curriculum. The new *Social Studies* curriculum that started to be used in 1998 was designed for the grades from 4th to 7th and taught for three class hours per week. The skills included in the 1998 *Social Studies* curriculum are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Skills Included in the 1998 Social Studies Course Curriculum

Cause-Effect	Research-Examination	Working together	Critical Thinking	Speaking in Front of a Crowd	Time Perception	Reading and Using a Map
Reasoning	Making Inferences	Being Thrifty	Working in a Planned Way	Being Thrifty	Reading a History Map	

The 1998 Social Studies curriculum that included 13 skills involved both the elements such as being thrifty and working in a planned way that were aimed to be taught to students in social studies in the traditional sense, and the themes that were more contemporary and individual-centred such as critical thinking, research-examination, and reasoning.

6- 2005 Social Studies Course Curriculum

The 2005 elementary education curriculum was different from the previous curricula in many aspects. There were changes in the structure, content and course elements of the curriculum that could be regarded as significant. In this regard, it can be indicated that the 2005 Social Studies curriculum included important changes and modifications. The social studies course that was approached with mostly a multidisciplinary understanding turned into a structure that largely emphasized an interdisciplinary characteristic beginning from that year. Therefore, it can be stated that the content of the course was not fed only by history and geography, but also many other social and human sciences. In this restructuring process of the social studies course, the principles set in the social studies curricula that were implemented in the US by NCSS, which has the role of preparing these curricula in the country, were of great importance. The learning areas and themes were shaped based on the themes set by NCSS. Another difference of this curriculum from the others was that the skills and values to be taught were directly stated in the curriculum in writing. The new social studies curriculum that started to be used in 2005 was designed for the grades from 4th to 7th and taught for three class hours per week. The skills included in the 2005 social studies curriculum are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Skills Included in the 2005 Social Studies Course Curriculum

Recognising and Using Evidence	Planning and Writing Information in Useable Ways
Space Perception	Reading Tables, Diagrams and Graphs
Determining Cause-Effect Relationship	Making Comparisons
Using Library and Reference Sources	Decision-making
Written Communication	Using Visual Evidence
Observation	Interpreting Basic Statistical Data
Social Involvement	Distinguishing Between Phenomena and Thoughts
Making Scientific Generalisations	Reading a Map and Using an Atlas
Making Inferences	Entrepreneurship
Research	Social Involvement
Creativity	Communication
Distinguishing Between Historical Phenomena and Interpretations	Perception of Time and Chronology
Noticing Stereotypes	

With respect to the skills that were to be directly taught in the 2005 social studies curriculum, the first aspect that attracted the attention was the increase in the number of skills. The 2005 curriculum included more skills than the 1948, 1962, 1968, 1990 and 1998 curricula did. Beyond this increase in quantity, there were also significant changes with regard to the content. Within the scope of the social studies course that was defined as an effective citizenship

instructional curriculum, the skills aimed to be taught to students were not limited to the contents of history, geography and citizenship courses, and the outcomes also included different skills that individuals needed in the framework of the novelties brought to our lives in the 21st century.

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the close relationship of instructional curricula with social changes and transformations, this study examined the skills included in the social studies instructional curricula that was and is being implemented in Turkey in terms of historical and sociological aspects. Within the scope of the study, the curricula of 1948 citizenship course, 1962 state and society studies course, 1968, 1990, 1998 and 2005 social studies courses were examined.

Considering the findings revealed in the study, it can be stated that skills were limitedly included in the curricula implemented since the 1960s when citizenship education started to be provided within the social studies course, but the 2005 curriculum was stronger in the systematic and proportional sense in this respect. Especially the 1948 citizenship curriculum, which was included in the analysis to reveal the historical continuity, was quite poor in terms of skills. Although the 1962 state and society studies curriculum that was prepared after 15 years was relatively strengthened in the skills dimension, it was way behind the 2005 curriculum in the knowledge dimension. The course was enriched in terms of skills in 1968 when it took the title *Social Studies*, and the skills belonging to different disciplines constituting the course were included in the curriculum, although to a limited extent. In the 1990 and 1998 instructional curricula, there were not major changes in the skills dimension, and the structure of the curricula that were implemented in the past was maintained. In 2005, the social studies curriculum in which the themes and curriculum standards set by NCSS were incorporated included skills to be directly taught to students (Doganay, 2008). These skills were not discipline-specific skills belonging to the areas of history and geography, but they were in a structure that addressed citizenship requirements of the 21st century in a way that was shaped with globalisation and communication technologies.

If these results revealed based on the findings of this study were to be examined in the context of social experiences and transformations, it could be argued that the 1948 citizenship curriculum being relatively weak in terms of skills, and the few skills it included emphasizing working in a disciplined way and being thrifty were related to the political and military conditions of the time. A period when the world and the country were threatened by severe war conditions, and the political and economic crises arose after this period necessarily affected the education policies. In this sense, the Turkish Prime Minister of the time, Hasan Saka, said in his speech on the government program in the Turkish Grand National Assembly: *"For the last eight years, nearly half of the government budget, sometimes even more than the half, was allocated to the defence of the realm. In this respect, the situation is not more prosperous than it was during the war."* In such a country under severe military and economic conditions, the objective of making individuals citizens who work hard and make the best of available economic gains/values by means of education policies seems consistent with the cyclical conditions in the scope of the 1948 citizenship course. For sure, it might not be true to evaluate the education system of a country only by evaluating an event or the development index. 1940s were also the years that witnessed events that can be accepted as milestones for the internal politics of Turkey (Turan, 1986; Kalaycioglu, 2001; Sayari, 2014). While the single-party period that continued since the foundation of the Republic was replaced by the multi-party system, the Republican People's Party that run the country for decades passed the power to the Democratic Party (Akgun, 2001). As the internal politics of the country went through such deep splits and transformations, the international developments caused Turkey to enter into a difficult process in many aspects. In particular, what happened before, during and after the World War II, and the effects of these events on Turkey were deeply reflected in almost every dimension of social life. The economic instability due to the war conditions and its reflections in social life were profound (Karabicak, 2000; Ozkan & Temizer, 2009; Akman & Akman, 2011; Dokuyan, 2013). In other words, the country was shaken by domestic and international developments, and its fundamental dynamics was either threatened or changed. In a period when there was a high level of change, transformation and perception of threat, it was aimed to equip students with the habits/skills of working in a disciplined way and being thrifty through the courses in the scope of citizenship education. The relationship between the socio-cultural history of Turkey and its social studies curricula was also experienced similarly in different countries. For instance, while the economic issues/skills were emphasized in the US social studies curricula during and after the economic crises in 1929, more centralist and national issues/skills were highlighted in the curricula during the years of World War II (Conner & Bohan, 2014).

This overall picture can be accepted as consistent and meaningful within the conditions of the time, but in the 1948 curriculum, it is interesting to not see the signs of the transition to the multi-party system. In spite of this transition to the multi-party system, concepts such as democracy, elections and citizenship and skills to carry out these concepts were not included in the curriculum. This can be evaluated from two perspectives; first, severe military and economic conditions got ahead of democratic objectives, and second, because the multi-party system was not fully established, it

was not reflected in the curriculum. Either due to one of these reasons, or a completely different reason, the fact that no skills were included in the 1948 curriculum is accepted as a deficiency.

The periods when the 1962 and 1968 curricula were designed and implemented coincided with the years during which the country fought against deep problems around internal issues as it did during 1940s. Following the military coup in 1960, the Prime Minister and several ministers of the time were sentenced to death, which ended the Democratic Party period that started after the single-party ruling. The new military administration that came into power with the coup could not prevent the process of preparing a constitution that took freedom and individual as the basis, in a way that was opposite to the intervention (Ayan, 2007). The new constitution that brought broader rights and freedom to individuals came into effect as a form of legislation in 1961. This individual-focused liberation process that the country went through was also reflected in the instructional curricula, and the individual-focused skills that were not included in the 1962 state and society studies course were included in the 1968 social studies curriculum. In this context, the skills that first leapt to the eye were democratic life, decision-making, research, and observation. Aykac (2011) addressed this issue, and underlined that the 1968 social studies curriculum exhibited significant improvements in the skills dimension.

An important issue to consider with regard to this whole discussion is that education policies can be deeply affected by social/political developments as explained above with examples. Furthermore, processes can be experienced in which the dynamics of education come into play. This is valid in the progress of social studies curricula in Turkey. There is a need to evaluate the social developments and their reflections on the one hand, and on the other hand, to consider the developments in the instruction of the social studies course in other countries, particularly the US as the homeland of the course (Feins & Entin, 1967). As a matter of fact, the *New Social Studies Movement* in 1960s in the US and the vision, mission and structure of the social studies course proposed by the founders and supporters of this movement significantly affected the practices in Turkey. The influence area of this movement was not limited to Turkey, but it also had an influence in the curricula of many developing countries particularly in Africa, and late in 1960s, the US-led social studies curricula started to be implemented in these areas (Adewuya, 1992; Mhlauli, 2012). With the activities of NCSS in the following years, the effect of the US in the restructuring of the social studies course in different countries continued in the following years (Barth, 1994).

The elementary education curriculum of 1968 was implemented until the military coup period in 1980s, and in 1985 the multidisciplinary social studies course was removed while a new approach was adopted featuring national values in courses such as national history and national geography (Keskin & Keskin, 2013). In this regard, the 1980 constitution was the product of a mentality as a response to the 1961 constitution. The pro-coup leaders who argued that the 1961 constitution was more libertarian (Biol, 2012) favoured a curriculum that was statist, conservator and mostly emphasized knowledge instead of individual freedom in education, similar to any other aspect of the new system they established after 1980. Consequently, the social studies course was removed, and the history and geography courses that took the word "national" before their titles were included in the curriculum.

In 1990, the multidisciplinary social studies courses started to be taught again in the elementary education curriculum. The 1990 curriculum along with the 1998 curriculum that was exposed to various changes, and the skills dimension in these curricula exhibited a structure that was similar to previous curricula in general terms, and focused mostly on the skills of history and geography. Although it was taught under the title of social studies as a reflection of the multidisciplinary structure of the curriculum, this course was designed in a way in which the knowledge and skills related to history, geography and citizenship could be clearly distinguishable (Simsek, 2009).

Among the social studies instructional curricula implemented in Turkey, the one that was exposed to the most drastic change and transformation was the 2005 curriculum. This curriculum, which was first piloted in 2004, started to be implemented in the whole country as of 2005. The 2005 curriculum was different from the previous curricula especially in its educational philosophy (Beyaztas, Kapti & Senemoglu, 2013). While the pre-2005 curricula were formed according to the behaviourist approach that was based on transferring information in general, the 2005 curriculum was designed in a structure in which constructivism could be felt very strongly (Kan, 2010). This philosophical transformation was also reflected in the structure of the social studies course, and many skills to enable individuals to access and use information were included in the curriculum. It can be stated that such a fundamental change had two basic dynamics; the first one was undoubtedly the dynamics of the age. The 21st century brought to our lives many new concepts and dimensions that we were not used to before, and education as well as social studies education were not exempt from this influence. Another dynamic was the developments in the field of social studies education in the US. In particular, the activities carried out by NCSS were of significance for the design of the citizenship education curricula in many developing countries including Turkey. The effect of NCSS activities on the 2005 curriculum was very clear, and the themes, outcomes and skills of the curriculum consisted of the adaptation of the principles set by NCSS to a large extent. Within the scope of the 2005 curriculum, it was aimed to teach students both subject area skills and various new skills needed to adapt to the information-communication age of the 21st century in the globalising world.

Based on the findings obtained in the study, and the discussion of these findings, it can be concluded that education policies implemented in a country cannot be evaluated independent from the social change and transformation of that country, but the evaluations only considering these criteria would lack a set of aspects regarding the issue. When the social studies curricula in Turkey were evaluated in terms of the skills dimension in this respect, it can be argued that due to the severe military and economic conditions in 1940s, the curricula then aimed to educate citizens who are hard-working and have an economic consciousness. In 1960s, the country had a more individual-centred libertarian trend, and consequently, a set of skills on individuals' self-actualisation were added, although partly, to the curricula. This period was followed by the 1980 military coup, and the new military administration who viewed the 1961 constitution as too libertarian made changes in the education policies accordingly. The social studies course was removed, and instead, national history and national geography courses were added to the curriculum. In 1990s, the social studies course was re-introduced, but there were no significant progress and change in the skills dimension. Significant change was observed only in the 2005 curriculum, and this new social studies curriculum included skills towards both the subject area instruction, and the themes on contemporary citizenship.

Based on the findings reported, and the results revealed in the framework of the relevant literature, the following suggestions can be offered with relation to social studies education:

1. The skills dimension should not be neglected in the design of social studies curricula; it should be noted that the skills dimension is as important as the knowledge dimension.
2. In the new social studies curricula to be developed in the age of information and communication technologies, the competencies that this age requires should be taken into account while also considering the effects of socio-cultural dynamics; As is mentioned in the results and discussion sections of this paper, students should not be left with the lack of skills making the competition difficult from them in the globalising world due to certain negative situations experienced in quality at the local level.

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