

Examination of Teacher Opinions regarding History Topics of 7th Grade Social Studies*

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Abstract With this study, it was aimed at drawing attention to the troubles and problems encountered by the teachers in the presence of various variables regarding the teaching of the history topics in the 7th grade social studies course. At the same time, in order to offer solution suggestions for teaching history topics effectively, we have tried to reach a conclusion by asking teachers' opinions in order to help to the teachers. A semi-structured interview method was used in this qualitative study. In the analysis of the data, descriptive analysis technique was used. When the findings obtained from the research are examined, it is concluded that the social studies curriculum has deficiencies in the teaching of history topics, that the history topics are disjointed, that the chronological order is not paid enough attention, and that there is no integrity between the topics, and the teaching hours of social studies are not sufficient. At the end, the research was concluded with the suggestions such as the history topics in the 7th grade social studies course should complement one another, should not wander off from one topic to another, and should be presented in a certain chronological order and form integrity.

Keywords Social Studies, History Topics, Secondary School, Curriculum, Teaching

1. Introduction

Social science, a science that societies need to raise individuals adapting to the socio-cultural characteristics of the society, is about people's social lives, behavior, basic needs, the ways in which these needs are met and the activities carried out for meeting these needs. When we look at the curriculum of social studies course, we also see that it aims at providing individuals with positive behaviors in economic, social, cultural and political fields [6]. Topics related to history have a major role for social studies in achieving these specified goals.

One of the main purposes of social studies, we can say, is to raise effective citizens who have a sense of social and national responsibility and willing to take up a social mission. In reaching this goal, it is important to provide the students with an interest in history, love of history and knowledge of history. And for this, a good history education is essential. Students will take a firmer step towards becoming good citizens through this history education [17].

If the purpose of education is to convey cultural values to new generations, history, taking its origins from culture and consciousness will form the basis of these social values and culture. Nations with historical consciousness, on the way to becoming national power and civilization, will benefit from history as they benefit from this historical accumulation [2].

History, which plays an important role in transferring citizenship and cultural accumulation to new generations, has an important role in the curriculum social studies throughout the twentieth century [14].

In the social studies curriculum published in 2004, a holistic approach was followed by combining history with other disciplines in order to take the activities of the people as a whole (Ata, 2006). In short, history has been addressed to within an understanding that supports solving the problems in the social field and has taken its place in the programme of social studies [16].

One of the significant innovations in the teaching of history in the new social studies curriculum is the use of resources and evidence-based activities in the classroom environment. The constructivist approach on which the new programme is based focuses on several principles such as evidence-based inquiry, reaching and using primary and subsidiary sources, suggesting various solutions for historical problems, revealing products accepted by science of history, as well as cooperative learning. In evidence-based history teaching, the basic skill to be provided the students with is to think like a historian and to act like a historian [19].

2. Problem

Social studies is in the position of an important course that includes topics related to the discipline of social sciences such as geography, economics, sociology and history. History topics among these social science disciplines have a very important place in the social studies course. Considering the significance of history in the human life, it is quite important that the topics related to this discipline are better recognized, liked and taught. In this context, learning and liking the history topics in the social studies course easily will affect the 7th grade students', in the third level of secondary school, interests in the history courses in the higher grades. Accordingly, it seems important to determine the opinions of the social studies teachers, the practitioners of this course, and their solution suggestions for this problem in order to increase the effectiveness of teaching of history topics in the social studies course.

In this context, it was attempted to come up with a research sample by considering the problem sentence "What are the opinions of teachers regarding the teaching of history topics in the 7th grade social studies class in secondary school?" In this context, sub-problem sentences are:

- (a) Is the 7th Grade Social Studies Curriculum adequate in the teaching of history topics in Social Studies course?
- (b) Are the history topics in 7th Grade Social Studies course presented within a systematical integrity?
- (c) Do the history topics in the 7th Grade Social Studies course correspond to the student's level?
- (d) Do the students show necessary interest in the history topics in the 7th Grade Social Studies course?
- (e) Do you find 7th Grade Social Studies course books adequate in terms of form and content in the teaching of history topics?
- (f) Are the conditions (e.g. classroom sizes, educational equipment and hardware, etc.) in the school that you are serving at are adequate for teaching history subjects in the social studies course in an effective way?
- (g) What are the methods/techniques that you use in the teaching of history topics in the 7th Grade Social Studies course?
- (h) Do you use the environmental facilities (historical artefacts, historical personalities, the elderly, etc.) in the teaching of history topics in the 7th Grade Social Studies course?
- (i) What are your suggestions for the teaching of history topics in the 7th Grade Social Studies course?

3. Objective

The purpose of this study is to present various

suggestions by determining the opinions of social studies teachers regarding the teaching of history topics in the 7th grade social studies course.

4. Significance

It can be asserted that the "Social studies as conveyance of citizenship" approach adopted by social studies curriculum is actually the reflection of the basic understanding that enables the social studies course to exist. Besides, teaching children the undeniable value judgements, such as securing social uniformity and harmonious living of the society, is the most important purpose of conveying the citizenship knowledge to the society [5].

In the context of what is mentioned above, this study is considered to be important in terms of gathering the opinions of teachers regarding the teaching of the history topics in 7th grade social studies course, and offering suggestions in line with these opinions. In the literature review that has been carried out, the limited number of studies on this subject constitutes another factor that makes this study important.

5. Method

In this part of the study, the research model, the selection of universe and sample, the data collection tool as well as the methods and techniques related to the analysis and interpretation of the data are highlighted.

5.1. Research Model

This study, which is a qualitative study, uses screening model as the research model since it is based on teacher opinions. The screening model is an approach that aims to describe a situation that has been or continues to be experienced as it is. In other words, it is the evaluation of the situation in its own, without changing the conditions in that process [8]. From this perspective, this study aims to describe the opinions of social studies teachers working in Ağrı province within the context of the conditions they are in.

The basic method used in this research is semi-structured interview method. In this context, the semi-structured interview method is described below.

In the semi-structured interview method, it is necessary to ask a number of questions with a standard sentence structure produced and designed attentively to every interviewee following the same order [15].

5.2. Universe and Sample

The universe of this research consists of social studies teachers working in Ağrı province in the 2015-2016

academic year. The sample of the study consists of 20 interviewees who work as social studies teachers in Ağrı city center. The sample is closely related to the nature of the research being conducted and the resources of the researcher. Besides, it may not be possible to include more individuals to the sample because of the nature of the data collection method used in the research [20]. In this study, 'Easily accessible case sampling' was used as the sampling method. This method provided the research with speed and practicality.

5.3. Data Collection

First, the relevant literary review was carried out and related books were examined during the collection of data and preparing the theoretical form of the research.

The data in this study were obtained using a qualitative method. The data were obtained through face-to-face interviews with teachers. For this, interview method which is one of the most frequently used methods was used. The data in this study were obtained through semi-structured interview method, one of the interview methods.

5.4. The Interview

In order to carry out the interviews, social studies teachers working at schools were attempted to reach in the

first place. Most of the teachers that have been interviewed were contacted on the phone and asked for an appointment. Some of the teachers were asked for an appointment by going to their schools. Interviews started on 19.01.2016 and ended on 15.03.2016. 20 teachers from 18 different schools were interviewed. Interviews were usually held in the teachers' room and in vacant classrooms. The interviews lasted approximately 15-30 minutes. During the interview, the instruction in the interview form was read to the teacher, and after a relax atmosphere was provided, interview questions were asked to the teacher following the order. It was attempted to expand the teacher's opinions by giving probes from time to time. Interviews were recorded with a recorder device.

5.5. Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

In this study, descriptive analysis technique was used in the analysis of the data. "In descriptive analysis technique, the data obtained is summarized and interpreted according to the previously determined theme. In descriptive analysis, direct quotations are frequently given to reflect the views of the interviewed or observed individuals in order to express their opinions in an emphasized way. In such analyzes, the aim is to present the obtained findings to the reader in an organized and interpreted way." Yıldırım and Şimşek [20].

Name of the School		f	
Selahattin Eyyubi Secondary School		1	
Cumhuriyet Secondary School		1	
Özgür Azer Kurak Secondary School		1	
Ağrı İmam Hatip Secondary School		1	
Kadir Has Secondary School		2	
Kasım Bayram Secondary School		1	
Ertuğrul Gazi Secondary School		1	
Modern Bilgi Private School		1	
15 Nisan Secondary School		1	
İmkb Gazi Secondary School		1	
75'inci Yıl Secondary School		1	
Alparslan Secondary School		2	
Merkez Yüzüncü Yıl Secondary School		1	
Kadir Has Secondary School		1	
Fatih Sultan Mehmet Secondary School		1	
Murat Girl Regional Primary Boarding School		1	
Şehit Er Vefa Çelik Secondary School		1	
Kazım Karabekir Secondary School		1	
Professional Experience		Professional Experience	f
G ₁ 2 years	G ₁₁ 12 years	1 year	3
G ₂ 5 years	G ₁₂ 12 years	2 years	2
G ₃ 9 years	G ₁₃ 6 years	3 years	3
G ₄ 2 years	G ₁₄ 7 years	4 years	3
G ₅ 4 years	G ₁₅ 3 years	5 years	2
G ₆ 12 years	G ₁₆ 4 years	6 years	1
G ₇ 1 year	G ₁₇ 3 years	7 years	1
G ₈ 1 year	G ₁₈ 3 years	9 years	1
G ₉ 11 years	G ₁₉ 5 years	11 years	1
G ₁₀ 4 years	G ₂₀ 1 year	12 years	3
Gender		Male	14
		Female	6
Total			20

While having the interviews, the teachers are told that their names will not be used in the study and the codes as 'G₁, G₂...' are used instead.

6. Findings and Comments

In this section of the research, the findings and comments gained through the responses obtained through the interviews are indicated. Considering the main purpose of the research, the findings and comments are presented below, taking into account the order of the questions in the interview form.

6.1. Opinions regarding the question “What are your opinions regarding the sufficiency of teaching of History topics in 7th Grade Social Studies Curriculum?”

The responses and frequency distribution based on the answers given by the teachers to the question “What are your opinions regarding the sufficiency of teaching of History topics in 7th Grade Social Studies Curriculum?” are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Opinions regarding the question “What are your opinions regarding the sufficiency of teaching of History topics in 7th Grade Social Studies Curriculum?”

What are your opinions regarding the sufficiency of teaching of History topics in 7 th Grade Social Studies Curriculum?	
Teacher Opinions	f
(a) Class hours are not adequate	16
(b) Program is not adequate.	16
(c) History topics are presented in an intense way.	14
(d) Too many concepts (with which students are not familiar) are used.	11
(e) Number of learning outcomes is high.	7
(f) Others (Not appropriate for the student’s readiness, abstract topics, the topics do not meet the learning outcomes, the students find them boring, etc)	5

As seen in Table 1, 16 of the teachers stated that the class hours and the programme were inadequate. 14 of the teachers remarked that the history topics were given intensely. 11 of the teachers told that too many concepts (with which the students are not familiar) are given. 7 of the teachers indicated that the learning outcomes are high, 5 said the topics are not suitable for the readiness of the students, they are abstract, do not meet the leaning outcomes, are boring for the students, etc.

(G₈) Expressed their opinion as follows: “*Generally, the part up to Ottoman Empire is adequate. It is normal until the conquest of Anatolia, Battle of Malazgirt, primary chiefdoms, Anatolian Seljuk State, secondary chiefdoms; but I think the topics are jammed together. I think especially the Ottoman military structure, wars, sultans, and the period after the ascent in particular is not sufficient. They are linked, there is a link, but still I believe the topics are a little disjointed starting from the Ottoman. Apparently they tried to overcome this to some extent with the workbook, but I don’t think it is enough considering the class hours. We run out of time without having time to allocate for the workbook. I by no means*

think the class hours are sufficient taking into account the 7th grade social studies course book; because we never have the time to work on the workbook.

(The topics are) absolutely intense, and I do not believe what we teach will be permanent if we do not have them note the things we teach...

When the opinions of teachers are examined, it is inferred that the social studies curriculum is not sufficient. According to the opinions of the teachers, it is seen that the topics of social studies course are intensive, the class hours are not adequate, the number of learning outcomes is high, and the concepts with which the students are not familiar are too many. It is observed that the findings in this study corresponds with Aykaç’s (2007) finding that “although the content was reduced compared to the previous programme, it was inferred that a certain part of the teachers found the content in the new program much, the duration given is not enough for the activities.” in his research titled “Teacher Opinions Regarding Primary Education Social Studies Course” [1].

6.2. Opinions regarding the question “Are the History topics in 7th Grade Social Studies course given in a systematical integrity? What do you think about this?”

The responses and frequency distribution based on the answers given by the teachers to the question “Are the History topics in 7th Grade Social Studies course given in a systematical integrity? What do you think about this?” are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Opinions regarding the question “Are the History topics in 7th Grade Social Studies course given in a systematical integrity? What do you think about this?”

Are the History topics in 7 th Grade Social Studies course given in a systematical integrity? What do you think about this?	
Teacher Opinions	f
(a) The topics are given in a disjointed way and without paying attention to the link between them	17
(b) The topics are not given in an integrated way.	17
(c) The chronological order is not followed while giving the topics	10

As shown in Table 2, 17 of the participants said that the subjects were disjointed and that the topics were given without paying attention to the link between them, as well as that the subjects were not given as a whole. 10 teachers stated that while giving the topics, the chronological order was not paid attention.

(G₁₁) Expressed their opinion as follows: “*This is the topic that I suffer from the most in the 7th grades. I am more than complainant about this. There is not a systematical integrity in the book. It jumps from one topic to another. The children pass on to another topic without learning one, and without learning the other they pass on to another. It’s so fragmented that sometimes even I have trouble with this. Maybe I should complete what is*

missing, but will that be a problem in the following topics... I mean, there is no systematical integrity. This is the most tiring aspect of social studies anyways. Without links... definitely disjointed...

Considering what the teachers who participated in the interviews have told, it is seen that there is no integrity between the history topics in the 7th grade social studies course, that the topics are disjointed and no link can be established between them; besides, the chronological order is not followed and both teachers and students have difficulty in going through these topics. A minority of the teachers also stated that the topics are correlated and that they do not encounter with problems. This finding, obtained in the research, corresponds to Kurtulgan and Köstüklü's (2010) finding that "When the opinions regarding the deficiencies in the processing of the topics in the curriculum are examined, it is observed that the option suggesting the topics are not interrelated turns out to be in the first place as the significant deficiency." obtained in their study titled "Evaluating Teacher and Inspector Opinions in Teaching of History Topics in Primary Education 2nd Grade Social Studies Course" [13].

6.3. Opinions regarding the question "What do you think about the appropriateness of the History topics in the 7th Grade Social Studies course to the student's level?"

The responses and frequency distribution based on the answers given by the teachers to the question "What do you think about the appropriateness of the History topics in the 7th Grade Social Studies course to the student's level?" are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Opinions regarding the question "What do you think about the appropriateness of the History topics in the 7th Grade Social Studies course to the student's level?"

"What do you think about the appropriateness of the History topics in the 7th Grade Social Studies course to the student's level?"	
Teacher Opinions	f
(a) The topics are not appropriate to the student's level.	13
(b) The intensity of concepts and topics challenges the students.	11
(c) Topics' being disjointed makes it difficult for the student to understand.	9
(d) Students have difficulty in comprehending as the topics are generally abstract.	4
(e) The topics are not appropriate for the student's readiness.	3
(f) The topics are generally below the student's level.	1

As seen in Table 3, 13 of the interviewees stated that the subjects did not fit the student's level. 11 of them emphasized that the intensity of concepts and topics challenged the students, 9 indicated that disjointed and fragmented form of the topics makes the topics difficult for students to understand, 4 remarked that the topics remain as abstractions for the students, 3 stated that students have no difficulty in understanding, and 3 underlined that the topics are not appropriate for the student's readiness. 1 teacher

also said that the subjects were below the student's level.

(G₆) Expressed their opinions as follows: "Yes, actually this is one of the most important points to be criticized about the 7th grade. I definitely do not think it is fit for 7th grade level. Because when we made a comparison with the topics which we covered in the faculty of education, we see that this is way too much expanded for the 7th grade that it can cause distraction. And this constitutes a really serious trouble. We draw the children's attention to some extent but after a point they psychologically feel the fear of drowning and this shows that this is a difficult situation in terms of the appropriateness of the topic to the students' level."

Considering the expressions of participating teachers, it is understood that the topics in the 7th grade social studies course are given in a disconnected way, that the topics are abstract and are not proper for the readiness of the students, and as a result, the topics are not fit for the student's level. This finding of the research corresponds to Keçe's (2013) finding that "When examining teacher reviews on the intensity of the history topics in the 7th grade social studies programme, they pointed out that the program has a compressed content and consequently the students get bored, the history topics are very intense, and that there are problems with issues such as having to cover too many topics in a short period of time." in the study titled "The History Topics in Social Studies Curriculum: A Qualitative Research Based on Teacher Opinions"[21].

6.4. Opinions regarding the question "What do you think about whether students show necessary interest in the history topics in the 7th Grade Social Studies course?"

The responses and frequency distribution based on the answers given by the teachers to the question "What do you think about whether students show necessary interest in the history topics in the 7th Grade Social Studies course?" are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Opinions regarding the question "What do you think about whether students show necessary interest in the history topics in the 7th Grade Social Studies course?"

"What do you think about whether students show necessary interest in the history topics in the 7th Grade Social Studies course?"	
Teacher Opinions	f
(a) The interest in History topics changes according to the teaching method of the teacher.	17
(b) Their interest is generally low.	14
(c) Students get bored and lose interest as there is no integrity between the topics.	10
(d) They lose interest because the topics are rather intense.	6
(e) They do not have interest as they do not know what benefit they can obtain from history.	5
(f) The topics prove inadequate for being interesting for being verbal.	5

As Table 4 shows, 16 of the teachers attributed the interest of the students to the teaching method of the

teacher. 14 teachers generally stated that students were uninterested, while 10 teachers said that students were bored and that they lost focus due to no connection between the topics. 6 teachers attributed the indifference to the intensiveness of the subjects, while 5 teachers claimed that the students did not know what they would use history for and they were not interested because the subjects were not verbal.

(G₄) Expressed their opinion as follows: *"So, it cannot be said that the student showed great interest. Because, as I mentioned in the previous question, what do they do to sleep with little children when the narration is rather plain, they read novels, they read fairy tales, and when you tell it to them straight, history becomes less interesting and after a while, after 15-20 minutes the student is totally disconnected from the course. In other words, it is very difficult to keep the interest alive throughout the lesson, especially in this kind of verbal courses, and during the most important parts you see that the student is looking out the window or doing some random things in the back of the class, as they can become completely indifferent to the lesson..."*

According to what the teachers who were interviewed state, it is seen that there is generally little interest for the history subjects taken up within the course of social studies. As for the reasons of this disinterest; the methods that teachers use, the subjects that are unconnected and intense, the fact that students do not know what they would use history for, the problem of readiness and that the classrooms are too populated are observed. This finding of the research is seen to be an important factor in the forming of opinions by students who sometimes like the course and sometimes are disillusioned with it, as can be seen in the class that is the focus of "The Opinions of the Seventh Grade Primary School Students about the Study of History Topics in the Course of Social Studies and the Value of History" by Kaya and Güven [11]. The most important point that students have stated is whether history topics are boring or not. Some of the students have expressed these opinions by adding the factor of whether they are lengthy or not. Another reason for the issues is whether the topics are easily understood, and hence if they are permanently learned should. Another factor that plays a role in the formation of these opinions of the students is the teacher. It correlates with the finding that "students claim the personality, behavior, teaching method as in whether the teacher teaches the topic in a good and fun manner as determining factors."

6.5. Opinions regarding the question "Do you find the 7th Grade Social Studies course books to be sufficient in format and content regarding the teaching of History topics? Explain with your own reasoning."

The responses and frequency distribution based on the answers given by the teachers to the question "Do you

think the 7th Grade Social Studies course books are sufficient in teaching History topics?" are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Opinions regarding the question "Do you find the 7th Grade Social Studies textbooks to be sufficient in format and content regarding the teaching of History topics? Explain with your own reasoning."

Do you find the 7th Grade Social Studies textbooks to be sufficient in format and content regarding the teaching of History topics? Explain with your own reasoning.	
Teacher Opinions	f
(a) I do not find the social studies textbook to be generally sufficient in teaching of history topics.	19
(b) I think the social studies textbook lacks visual elements and maps for teaching history topics.	18
(c) History topics in the social studies textbook are appropriate language and expression-wise	13
(d) History topics in the social studies textbook are unrelated to each other, scrambled and given without chronological order.	10
(e) The design of the social studies textbook (cover, font style, font size, general dimensions) is appropriately made.	6
(f) History topics in the social studies textbook do not provide the necessary proper learning outcome (insufficient content).	5

As Table 5 shows, 19 of the teachers stated that they found the social studies textbook sufficient in the teaching of history subjects. 18 teachers stated that the social studies textbooks are missing in terms of visual subjects and maps in teaching of history, 13 stated that the social studies textbooks are suitable in terms of language and expression in history, 10 teachers stated that history topics in social studies textbooks are unrelated to each other and given without chronological order, 5 of them stated that the textbooks did not meet the learning outcome in teaching of history topics and 6 teachers expressed that the social studies textbook design (cover, font style, font size, dimensions, etc.) was suitable.

(G₃) Expressed their opinion as follows: *"The 7th grade textbook is insufficient, visually lacking. The visualization was diminished under the pretense of reducing the size of it. I mean, the book is thinner but it can be thicker with more visualization. It especially lacks in maps, graphs, as we need detailed maps while teaching certain topics. The books require spaces in certain spots of pages for the students to take notes. The language used is appropriate, the content is okay. But the lack of visualization is there."*

Looking at what the teachers who were interviewed say, it was seen that the 7th grade textbook was not sufficient in teaching the history topics. It has been observed that the teachers relate the reasons for this to the fact that especially the history maps and visuals are not enough, that the subjects are disconnected and that the chronological order is not established and that the contents cannot meet the proper learning outcome. The results obtained in the study and what Kurtulgan and Köstüklü (2010) found in their study titled "Evaluation of Teacher and Inspector Opinions in the Teaching of History Subjects in Social Studies Course for 2nd Stage of Primary Education", the fact that 34.5% of our teachers do not find it sufficient is quite a

substantial ratio and an important finding, as they correlate with the evidence that textbooks should be prepared more carefully. It is evidence that the textbooks need to be prepared more carefully. There are also teachers who found the course book to be satisfactory, at least partially [13].

6.6. Opinions regarding the question “Are the conditions of the school you serve at (class populations, educational tools and hardware, etc.) adequate for effectively teaching history topics in the course of social studies? What do you think about this particular topic?”

The responses and frequency distribution based on the answers given by teachers to the question “Are the conditions of the school you serve at (class populations, educational tools and hardware, etc.) adequate for effectively teaching history topics in the course of social studies? What do you think about this particular topic?” are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Opinions regarding the question “Are the conditions of the school you serve at (class populations, educational tools and hardware, etc.) adequate for effectively teaching history topics in the course of social studies? What do you think about this particular topic?”

Are the conditions of the school you serve at (class populations, educational tools and hardware, etc.) adequate for effectively teaching history topics in the course of social studies? What do you think about this particular topic?	
Teacher Opinions	f
(a) The smart boards that are in active use, which were implemented with Fatih Project this year make up for most of the lack of teaching tools and materials at schools.	17
(b) Class populations are at normal levels.	14
(c) We find it hard to acquire teaching tools (maps, graphs, samples, models, etc.).	14
(d) Conditions at school are sufficient.	10
(e) Teaching becomes problematic due to over-crowded class populations.	7

As you can see in Table 6, 17 teachers stated that the smart boards that are in active use, which were implemented with Fatih Project this year make up for most of the lack of teaching tools and materials at schools. Nevertheless, 14 teachers stated that they had difficulty in finding teaching tools (maps, graphics, samples, models, etc.) that they could use and 14 said that classroom attendance was normal. 10 teachers were satisfied with the conditions, 7 teachers had difficulty in teaching the class because it was over-crowded, and 4 teachers explained that they did not have difficulty in finding teaching tools that they could use. Looking at the table, half of the teachers do not find the conditions in their schools adequate while half of the teachers find the conditions in the schools adequate.

(G7) Expressed their opinion as follows: “*This was the topic with which I was having the most trouble, when I was first assigned. When I first came in and looked at the school, I pointed out the physical conditions. For instance,*

I did not have enough maps, no projectors, as I would have liked to show some maps from my computer to the students. I did not have any models, or any other sort of visualization tools, no tools of education, nothing at all. But this year, our smart boards have just been installed and the physical conditions of the school have improved quite a bit with the boards as well...”

Looking at what was told by the teachers who were interviewed, it is seen that the interactive (smart) boards distributed by the Ministry of Education to the schools within the scope of the Fatih Project provide teachers with important facilities. However, it was understood that a considerable part of the teachers who participated in the interview did not think that the physical conditions and equipment of the schools were not sufficient. It is observed that this finding of the study correlates with the results found by Kaya and Yilmaz (2011) in their study titled “Social Studies Teachers' Perception of History and Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching of History”, pointing out that the physical conditions and financial capabilities of the school were not enough to provide teaching in accordance with constructive approach, that they do not possess the necessary teaching materials and sources for alternative evaluation methods [12].

6.7. Opinions regarding the question “What methods-techniques do you use in teaching of history topics in 7th grade course of Social Studies? Explain briefly.”

The responses and frequency distribution based on the answers given by teachers to the question “What methods-techniques do you use in teaching of history topics in 7th grade course of Social Studies? Explain briefly,” are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Opinions regarding the question “What methods-techniques do you use in teaching of history topics in 7th grade course of Social Studies? Explain briefly.”

What methods-techniques do you use in teaching of history topics in 7 th grade course of Social Studies? Explain briefly.	
Teacher Opinions	f
(a) I use plain narrative and question & answer method due to insufficient duration of courses.	19
(b) Sometimes I use different methods and techniques (dramatization, re-enactment, brain storming, etc.)	7
(c) I lack enough materials for different methods.	3
(d) Over-crowded classrooms prevent me from using different methods.	1

Looking at the teachers' opinions in Table 7, it can be seen that 19 teachers stated that they usually use plain narrative and question-answer method because the lesson duration is not sufficient. 7 of them stated that they occasionally use different methods and techniques (dramatization, re-enactment, brain storming, etc.). 3 of the teachers said that the materials to use different methods are

lacking, while 1 teacher said that over-crowded classroom populations prevent the use of different methods.

(G₁₁) Expressed their opinion as follows: *“Unfortunately, we have to use the plain narrative often. As I said, it is a verbal course which requires me to lecture, I can sometimes use question-answer and sometimes dramatization while teaching about topics like cultural aspects, state-running, military but the question-answer method is the one I use the most. In order for us to use different methods, the curriculum must be downsized as the duration of lessons are already not adequate...”*

Looking at what was said by the teachers who were interviewed, it was seen that most of the teachers used the plain narrative and question-answer method. It was observed that teachers seemed to do this, for example, due to the fact that social studies course duration was inadequate; that they were worried about not being in synchronization with the curriculum and that classes were over-crowded. The finding obtained in the study correlates with Kurtulgan and Köstüklü’s (2010) findings in their study titled “Evaluation of Teacher and Inspector Opinions in the Teaching of History Subjects in Social Studies Course for 2nd Stage of Primary Education” which states that teachers seem to need and rely more on plain narrative, question-answer methods and similar activities. On the other hand, it seems that the finding which states that “they do not use field trips, simulations and case methods adequately” also correlates. A small number of teachers were observed to use different methods and techniques in their lessons [13].

6.8. Opinions regarding the question “What do you think about the use of circumferential facilities (historical artifacts, historical personalities, elderly people, etc.) for the teaching of history topics in 7th grade Social Studies course?”

The responses and frequency distribution based on the answers given by teachers to the question “What do you think about the use of circumferential facilities (historical artifacts, historical personalities, elderly people, etc.) for the teaching of history topics in 7th grade Social Studies course?” are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Opinions regarding the question “What do you think about the use of circumferential facilities (historical artifacts, historical personalities, elderly people, etc.) for the teaching of history topics in 7th grade Social Studies course?”

What do you think about the use of circumferential facilities (historical artifacts, historical personalities, elderly people, etc.) for the teaching of history topics in 7th grade Social Studies course?	
Teacher Opinions	f
(a) Ağrı city center is not rich in historical artifacts, which is why we cannot take advantage of it in the center	20
(b) There are historical artifacts in the sub-provinces but our financial capabilities are not sufficient for field trips	18
(d) There are no historical personalities or elderly people we can take advantage of in the area.	15
(c) We have trouble getting the necessary permits in order to organize field trips to historical places.	8
(g) There are no museums in Ağrı	6
(e) Climate conditions prevent us.	2
(f) There is not enough time to take the children there.	2

Looking at Table 8, the entirety of the teachers interviewed, all 20 of them, stated that Ağrı province center is not rich in historical artifacts and therefore they could not benefit from that in the center. 18 people stated that there are historical artifacts to be visited but the financial means to organize the trip are insufficient. 8 people said that they have experienced difficulties acquiring permissions for arranging trips to historical places. 15 people stated that there are no historical personalities in the area, 6 people expressed that there are no museums to visit, while 2 people have said that climatic conditions prevent them and they do not have enough time.

(G₉) Expressed their opinion as follows: *“Unfortunately it is a problem in our region. Whether it is because of no archaeology museums or archaeological research or not being able to find historical personalities in the area, it truly affects us. As a result, we have no endeavors in that regard. Meanwhile, there are historical artifacts and beauties in the neighboring areas but the necessary bureaucratic procedures and permit processes tie our hands. That does tie our hands, because we need actual official permits just to be able to leave the city limits or to go to sub-provinces. We are supposed to take charge of the students in such a case and the fact that parents do not give their consent unfortunately prevents us from moving forward with the arrangements and we cannot deal with that kind of a situation.”*

According to the statements of the teachers, it is observed that the number of historical places and museums to which they can take their students are limited, and that they cannot go to the historical places in the sub-provinces or neighboring cities due to negative circumstances such as financial impossibilities, failure to acquire permits and climatic conditions. It is also understood that there are no historical personalities or elderly people accessible to them in their area.

6.9. Opinions regarding the question “What are your suggestions for teaching of history topics in the curriculum of 7th Grade Social Studies Course Curriculum?”

The responses and frequency distribution based on the answers given by teachers to the question “What are your suggestions for teaching of history topics in the curriculum of 7th Grade Social Studies Course Curriculum?” are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Opinions regarding the question “What are your suggestions for teaching of history topics in the curriculum of 7th Grade Social Studies Course Curriculum?”

What are your suggestions for teaching of history topics in the curriculum of 7 th Grade Social Studies Course Curriculum?	
Teacher Opinions	f
(a) The weekly number of social studies courses in schools must be increased.	18
(b) For activities in historical places such as field trips and observations, Ministry of National Education or provincial directorates must develop certain projects or support this type of activities that are carried out by individual schools.	16
(c) Topics in the teaching of history for 7 th grade social studies course must be interconnected and chronological order must be maintained.	13
(d) The textbook must be prepared with interconnected topics by enriching them with the use of visuals and maps so that it can be attractive and appealing.	11
(e) Learning outcomes must be simplified and the intensity of topics must be reduced.	8
(f) The topics must be made more appealing with the increased use of maps and visuals.	7
(g) Schools must be provided with the supportive teaching tools and hardware to be used in the teaching of history topics.	7
(h) Schools must have specialized applications such as social studies classes or social studies laboratories	2

In Table 9, looking at the opinions and suggestions of the teachers who participated in the interview, it is observed that 18 people said that the weekly number of courses should be increased, while 16 people stated that for activities in historical places such as field trips and observations, Ministry of Education or provincial directorates developed projects must develop certain projects or support this type of activities that are carried out by individual schools. 13 of the teachers stated that the chronological order must be maintained and links between the history topics in 7th grade social studies course must be established. 11 teachers think that textbooks must be

prepared with interconnected topics by enriching them with the use of visuals and maps so that it can be attractive and appealing. In addition to these, 8 teachers expressed that the learning outcomes should be simplified and the intensity of the subjects should be reduced, 7 of them suggested that the topics must be made more appealing with the increased use of maps and visuals and also schools must be provided with the supportive teaching tools and hardware to be used in the teaching of history topics, while 2 teachers stressed out that schools must have specialized applications such as social studies classes or social studies laboratories.

(G₂) Expressed their opinion as follows: “*My priority suggestion is that the learning outcomes must be simplified further and reduced, while maintaining relation between topics and chronological order as well as including increased visualization, maps, and materials that could appeal to the children and therefore focusing the attention of students with interesting attributes. Other than that, students need to be able to satisfy their need towards acquiring a historical awareness that starts with the family and in primary school. I mean, there is a yearly event in Sarıkamış, so at least Ministry of Youth and Sports along with Ministry of National Education must identify a certain number of students every year and send them there and also to Çanakkale from every city and every school with a pre-set number of students. This kind of an endeavor would help increase the interest of students towards history. Field trips would allow the children to learn better by experiencing and visualizing. Neighboring areas may also work in that regard. For instance, we could go to Doğubeyazıt, Bitlis, Erzurum and Van. The circle must be widened after starting with the neighboring areas, I mean, the kids only know about İshak Pasha Palace in Doğubeyazıt. They have no idea about what kind of cultural and historical artifacts Bitlis, Van, Erzurum are home to. Because they have never been there. If Ministry of National Education carries out such a project, I believe the students will improve. Again, every school must be supplied with what they need in terms of educational tools, as well as projectors or those provided by Fatih Project and this must be handled with more care - as the level of information of students will increase with the increase of educational tools.*”

7. Conclusions and Discussion

This chapter includes the results obtained from the answers given by the teachers to the questions of the interview.

Upon evaluation of the research findings, the majority of the teachers agree that the weekly number of courses is inadequate. The fact that the duration of social studies courses are inadequate is seen as a problem by the teachers. The fact that weekly number of social studies courses are

so few is observed to affect the teachers negatively in many aspects. The lack of adequate course hours has caused them to worry about not being able to keep in synchronization with the curriculum, which limits the use of different methods and techniques. For this reason most of the teachers preferred the method of plain narrative. In addition to these, the lack of weekly course hours prevents teachers from spending time for extracurricular activities. Kavak (2006) has obtained similar results in his study entitled "Evaluation of the Content of History Topics in Primary School Social Studies Curriculum That Came into Effect in 1998". Kavak (2006) concluded that the lesson time allocated to the curriculum of social studies class was insufficient, and that teachers had difficulty in catching up on the topics and they were teaching with classical methods more often [10]. Also, Kan (2012) who achieved similar results in his work "Seventh-grade Primary School Students' Opinions About the Way History Topics are Given in Social Studies Courses and About the Value of History in Their Lives", states that lesson hours and curriculum intensity prevent the use of different methods-techniques [9]. A similar result was obtained by Ünal (2012) in his work "Problems Encountered Regarding the Student-Centric Methods Used by Social Studies Teachers in Teaching of History Topics". Ünal expresses that social studies teachers do not use different methods and techniques due to lack of time and this issue leads them towards using more traditional methods [18].

At the same time, it is seen as an important problem that the history subjects are intensive, the concepts that the students are strangers to are high in number and also the number of learning outcomes are high. Besides, the fact that history topics are abstract and that these topics are not suitable for students' readiness are also among the other results reached. Akmehmetoğlu (2014) reached the same results in his postgraduate dissertation titled "Problems of Social Studies Teachers in Social Studies Teaching" by saying that the subjects were abstract to the students, the readiness levels of the students were not sufficient and the course times were inadequate. When we look at the results of these studies which support each other, it can be seen that the social studies curriculum has some deficiencies. These deficiencies cause various problems for teachers and students in the teaching of history topics [22].

In the study, it was seen that the history topics in the 7th grade social studies course did not constitute coherence. It was understood that the topics were disconnected from each other and at the same time it was seen that the chronological order was not maintained. It was observed that the teachers had quite substantial difficulties with the teaching process and that the students had difficulty understanding what was taught. This problem has been expressed by many of the teachers in many parts of the interview. This has resulted in the deduction of the fact that the students were unable to understand the history topics, and that the teachers had difficulty in lecturing them.

Fettahoğlu's (2011) study named "Assessment of 7th Grade Social Studies Curriculum According to Teachers' Opinions" is seen to state that it has been expressed by the teachers regarding the contents that the topics were inconsistent [7]. Kavak (2006) has reached correlative results in his study entitled "Evaluation of the Content of History Topics in Primary School Social Studies Curriculum That Came into Effect in 1998". Kavak (2006) has obtained results which amount to the fact that there is no topic coherence between unit topics, and subtopics and that it is not possible to process the entire Ottoman history within 7th grade history courses [10].

In general, students do not show much interest in history topics. It has been observed that this disinterest depends on the teachers' methods of teaching. It is understood that students show less interest in traditional methods. However, the problems created by the incoherence between the topics have also been seen to have had a negative impact on the interest of the students. Other conclusions reached regarding the diminished interest of students towards history topics are evaluated as the fact that the students do not know what historical knowledge is used for, the topics are intense and classrooms are overpopulated, along with the lack of curiosity for historical matters. Akmehmetoğlu's (2014) study "Problems of Social Studies Teachers in Social Studies Teaching" has achieved the following similar results. He expresses that the students could not show the necessary interest in the course and they did not know what to expect from it, also that they did not have any attention towards the topics while having no study habits [22].

It has been understood that social studies textbook lacks maps and other visual elements with no chronological order between topics, it handles the topics in a confusing and disconnected manner, while its topics not being able to provide the necessary learning outcomes as it is not on an adequate level which results in not being able to respond to the needs of the teachers and the students. It is seen that the book is generally appropriate in terms of language and expression. Ünal (2012) with his study titled "Problems Encountered Regarding the Student-Centric Methods Used by Social Studies Teachers in Teaching of History Topics" has reached the following conclusions about the textbook: The fact that the 7th grade social studies textbooks do not have enough information or visuals lead the teachers to other source materials, the textbook is not appropriate for the ages of the students and is not appealing to them, which results in the importance of the textbook being affected negatively in the social studies course. [18]. Akmehmetoğlu (2014) found out that the textbooks were inadequate, the students were directed to other source books, and the topics were discussed in a superficial way, in his work "Problems of Social Studies Teachers in Social Studies Teaching". As a result, it has been understood that the social studies textbook is inadequate and does not fully respond to the needs [22].

In particular, the interactive boards distributed by MEB to the schools within the framework of Fatih Project during the 2015-2016 academic year have corresponded to a great deal of deficiencies in class materials and equipment and provided a significant advantage to the schools which demonstrates the significance of using technology in education. Besides, it turns out that the class sizes are now as crowded as before, in many schools there is an average number of student attendance, and that in general the conditions have improved, though these might change from one school to another. Nevertheless, there has also been an important outcomes suggesting that the conditions in schools are insufficient, there are problems with reaching the materials and equipment to be used in classes (maps, graphics, samples, models, etc.), the class sizes are crowded and that causes problems. Aykaç (2007) attained similar results in the study titled “Teachers’ Views towards Primary Education Social Studies Course Education and Training Programme”. Aykaç has found that the insufficiency of materials, equipment and resources is a major shortcoming for teachers, which in turn limits a rich educational environment [1].

It has been observed that in general teachers use straight question-and-answer method. It has been found out that the insufficiency of class hours to use different methods, the crowded state of the classroom and the lack of materials to use different methods lead teachers to choose this method. The use of the straight telling method generally results from the problems that teachers have with school facilities. That teachers use different methods at least partially is among the results that have been obtained. In the study titled “Evaluation of the History Topics in terms of Content in the Social Studies Curriculum in Primary School Put into Effect in 1998” Kavak (2006) put forth that the deficiency in libraries, lack of laboratories, gymnasiums etc. which students can benefit from in schools limits the teaching methods; at the same time, the fact that the classes are crowded makes it difficult for the teachers to command the class, and as a result the teachers usually prefer the ways through which they can assure class command [10].

It has been observed that Ağrı city center is not rich in terms of historical artifacts which prevents them from taking advantage of activities such as field trips and observations, while at the same time, it has been seen that there are historical sites in sub provinces and yet financial situation does not allow for it, as well as having issues with bureaucratic procedures and finding sufficient time for it. Because of these reasons, teachers could not organize extracurricular activities such as sightseeing, observation, etc. as often. As for the historical personalities and the elderly, it is understood that they do not have such facilities in their area. Atbaşı (2007) in his work titled “Difficulties of Teaching and Learning Social Studies Course for 2nd Stage (6th and 7th Grade) Primary School”, supports this claim by stating that bureaucratic obstacles are the most important reason why there are not many activities such as

field trips, observations and inspections [4]. Again, Kurtulgan and Köstüklü (2010) reached similar conclusions by expressing that state institutions do not mobilize their resources sufficiently or fulfill their obligations in their study of “Evaluation of Teacher and Inspector Opinions in the Teaching of History Subjects in Social Studies Course for 2nd Stage of Primary Education” [13].

For the ninth question, the opinions and suggestions of the teachers about the subject were used. For the particular topic, teachers made suggestions such as increasing the weekly social studies course times, for the Ministry of Education or provincial directorates to develop certain projects or support such activities that focus on field trips or observations in historical places, interconnecting the historical topics in the 7th grade social studies course and maintaining chronological order, for the textbook to be enriched with visuals and maps that would link the topics to each other and therefore making the textbook more appealing, for the learning outcomes to be simplified, for the topic intensity to be reduced, making the topics more interesting by increasing the number of maps and visualization, making up for the missing supportive teaching tools for schools that would assist in teaching of history topics, that there should be specialized social studies classrooms and social studies laboratories in each school.

8. Suggestions

The following suggestions can be made based on the results of the study:

- (1) History topics in the 7th grade social studies course must be given in a coherent and connected manner, while maintaining chronological order and in unity.
- (2) In order to process the topics covered in the social studies curriculum with richer methods and techniques, and to ensure that the topics are completed on time, the weekly number of social studies course lessons need to be increased. Increasing the number of lessons will provide a more relaxed learning environment for teachers and students.
- (3) Considering student readiness, topics can be made more appropriate to student level by emphasizing more concrete expressions than what was used for their period of development.
- (4) Teachers can make teaching of history topics more efficient for students by using advanced methods and techniques instead of monotonous teaching methods in lessons. In order for them to be able to do this, it is necessary to increase the number of social studies course times.
- (5) Decreasing the class populations, simplifying the intense topics, use of different methods and

techniques may improve students' interest towards the course.

- (6) Social studies textbook can be enriched in terms of maps and visuals according to the specific topics. The topics should be handled in a manner that will meet the learning outcomes and attention should be paid so that there are no missing details or too much detail.
- (7) If the teachers use the interactive boards that have been installed and went into active use this year within Fatih Project that can make up for the deficiencies of the teaching tools and equipment in an effective way. At the same time, the teachers may be able to eliminate these deficiencies by using different methods and techniques they intended to use before but could not implement because of the reasons mentioned earlier. These can be methods that involve using virtual museums, videos, virtual trips, etc.
- (8) The Ministry or provincial directorates can encourage field trips that would allow students to gain experience first-hand by visiting historical places in nearby areas, by providing them with the necessary permits, vehicles, financing etc.
- (9) Teachers can teach the students about what history is, why it is important and what effect it has in our daily lives. A well-built historical awareness may prompt curiosity and interest.

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