

## How to Teach Critical-thinking in social studies education: An Examination of Three NCSS Journals

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### Abstract

*Problem Statement:* Teaching a student critical - thinking skills has always been an important mission of social studies education. Over the years, literature and scholarly interest in critical-thinking in social studies have grown sporadically. Nevertheless, growing interest in the literature and commitment among the scholars did not ensure successful teaching of critical-thinking in classrooms. In fact, research evidence clearly indicates that the teaching of critical-thinking skills in a social studies classroom has been problematic and unsuccessful.

*Purpose of study:* The purpose of this study was to identify approaches that social studies scholars believed or suggested to be more likely and predictive of success in the teaching of critical-thinking in social studies classrooms. A corollary purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive resource for social studies scholars concerning ways to promote critical-thinking in classrooms.

*Methodology:* In this study, historical analysis method was used. Journal articles published between 1977 and 2006 in three major journals of NCSS, namely, *Social Education*, *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, and *Middle Level Learning* were examined and analyzed. A total of one hundred thirty two (132) articles were identified and used to answer the following research questions: Over the years what method(s) have social studies scholars identified or suggested as beneficial for promoting critical-thinking in classrooms? What methods have they emphasized? Is there a commonality or divergence among the suggested method(s) for

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promoting critical-thinking? How have scholars' approaches for promoting critical-thinking changed, (if at all)?

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*Findings:* Analysis of the data indicated that to foster critical-thinking, three patterns – the use of *classroom discussions*, *writing activities*, and *questions* – persisted in the literature and were believed to be essential. Scholars highlighted the role of technological developments and inquiry into methods of the teaching of critical-thinking as well. However, it was also found that the role of classroom context or classroom atmosphere did **not receive much scholarly attention**. Overall, social studies scholars' views on promoting critical-thinking have shown more commonality than divergence.

*Conclusion:* The result of this study revealed that the use of *classroom discussions*, *writing activities*, and *questions* should be utilized more in social studies classrooms to promote critical-thinking. However, more studies are needed to examine the effects of discussions, writing activities, and questions on the development of critical-thinking skills. Additionally, the role of classroom context or classroom atmosphere should also be investigated.

*Keywords:* Critical-thinking, ways to promote critical-thinking, social studies education, and NCSS journals.

Teaching critical-thinking has always been an important mission of social studies education, and thus a subject of considerable attention in the social studies literature. Although many agree that ability to think is a necessary condition for being educated (McPeck, 1981; Siegel, 1984), in relation to social studies, it is generally held that “good thinking is a prerequisite for good citizenship” (Nickerson, 1987, p.31). This established relationship, according to some, is and has been the essence of social studies education.

Scholars of social studies have long recognized critical-thinking as a fundamental part of the social studies curriculum (Cornbleth, 1985; Krug, 1967; Hunt and Metcalf, 1968; McFarland, 1985; Wilen, 1996; Wright, 1995). In practice, though, an extensive body of literature attests to the absence of critical-thinking instruction in social studies classrooms. Over the years, numerous studies as well as extensive literature reviews have shown that in social studies classrooms, critical-thinking has rarely been central or even taught (Cornbleth, 1984; Goodlad, 1984; Martorella, 1991; McKee, 1988; Newmann, 1991; Olsen, 1995; Onosko, 1991; Parker, 1991; Patrick, 1986; Unks, 1985; Wright, 1995; Wilen, 1996).

Despite social studies scholars' advocacy for critical-thinking, or because of it, the question that many scholars and practitioners have been asking remained the same:

What activities are more likely or predictive of success in the teaching of critical-thinking in social studies? How is critical-thinking promoted in social studies classrooms? To be able to answer questions like these, one thing is certain: accumulated research findings and recommendations constitute one of the most credible and important bases for social studies scholars and practitioners.

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), as the principal organization of social studies, has been committed to the advancement of social studies education since 1921. NCSS has reached out to social studies scholars, has provided teachers with the pedagogical tools and information, and has contributed to the field by publishing information through its publications. With its general membership of more than 25,000 members from all around the world and from a variety of educational backgrounds (i.e., teachers, curriculum specialists, professors, etc.), many would agree that NCSS is an authoritative and valid voice for the social studies. In fact, some argue that many teachers specifically look to NCSS publications for direction in resolving a range of issues. Despite its role and impact on social studies education, no study has yet examined the information disseminated by NCSS publications regarding critical-thinking.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the published journal articles in three major journals of NCSS to identify approaches that social studies scholars believed to be or suggested as more likely and predictive of success in the teaching of critical-thinking in social studies classrooms.

### Method

In this study, historical analysis, which is the systematic collection and evaluation of data related to past events, was used. In accordance with the historical method, the validity and reliability of the data is evaluated by external and internal criticism. Numerous historians, such as Marius (2002), Shafer (1969), and Storey (1999) indicated common elements that are considered essential to definitive historical method. These include:

- 1- Being systematic in collecting, selecting, and analyzing primary and secondary sources,
- 2- Fundamental reliance on primary sources,
- 3- A utilization of secondary resources for corroboration,
- 4- Integrity in reporting, selecting, and using from these resources,
- 5- Conclusions with evidentiary basis,
- 6- Selectivity based on the relevant resources, the importance of resources, and the judged validity of resources,
- 7- Analyzing change and continuity over time.

The historical method was preferred primarily because it provides a unique way of looking at such a broad phenomenon and it allowed the researcher to look at these

various resources with a degree of freedom which, then, allowed her to draw conclusions based on a variety of content in a variety of articles by a variety of authors. By using this method, the author of this study attempted to determine the direction and importance of prevailing thought and eventually to draw a conclusion about phenomenal patterns.

This study used journal articles published between the years of 1977 and 2006 in three major journals of NCSS: *Social Education*, *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, and *Middle Level Learning*. Each of these journals was selected because they are major journals of NCSS dealing with the social studies and improving social studies instruction by providing both theoretical perspectives and practical teaching ideas to the scholarly community. In that sense, reading these journals is one of the ways that social studies scholars are exposed to both theory and research concerning critical-thinking. For the purpose of this study, a broad definition of critical-thinking is used, which encompasses all the cognitive processes and strategies, attitudes and dispositions, as well as decision-making, problem solving, inquiry, and higher-order thinking.

To control subjectivity as much as possible, the author carefully considered the search process and followed systematic logical steps in the selection of articles. Based on available literature as well as the previous literature reviews (e.g., Cornbleth, 1985; Parker, 1991; McKay & Gibson, 2004) such words as *thinking*, *critical-thinking*, *decision-making*, and *problem solving* were identified as search keywords. Then, the author accessed back issues of *Social Education*, *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, and *Middle Level Learning* to select published articles for further analysis. When she accessed the previous issues, she first looked for each keyword within title of the each article and examined them by taking a critical look at the first couple of paragraphs and skimming the rest to determine whether the article contained any or some of the keywords. If it did, the next thing she did was examine the article critically to identify whether or not its content was relevant to the research questions, and thus to the study. Then each selected article was assigned an identification number (ID#), which consisted of the last two digits of the year in which the article was published, and an abbreviation of SE, YL, or ML, which stood for each journal, and a chronologically assigned number (i.e., 77-YL-1).

Although identification of a wide range of articles and inclusiveness were the primary purposes, the author tried not to be exhaustive in this process and tried to keep her focus on the research questions. That is also one of the reasons why questions specifically dealing with the definition of critical-thinking – do scholars agree, disagree, is there ever a consensus on a definition or a change over time? – are not answered in this article.

To guide data analysis in a systematic and a uniform manner, the author first read each article thoroughly. Then, she looked for the meaningful information and for answers to the research questions she was pursuing and noted the pertinent information. She recorded each piece of information including bibliographical information of the articles, related patterns seen in the article, important ideas and

points, and quotes from the article concerning suggested methods of teaching critical-thinking. Then printed copies of data were obtained.

Although initial analysis of the data began during the data collection and recording phase of the inquiry, the author began studying and interpreting the data deliberately right after the data recording process was completed. She exclusively looked for meaningful patterns and paid attention to regularities as well as irregularities reflected in the data source. Although capturing a wide range of emphasis and patterns presented in the documents was the primary purpose, the main purpose for the author was to focus on the research questions.

A total of one hundred thirty two (132) articles from the thirty-year period were identified as dealing with critical-thinking in some way or another and were used to specifically answer the following questions:

- Over the years what kind of method(s) have social studies scholars identified or suggested as beneficial for promoting critical-thinking in classrooms?
- What methods did they emphasize?
- Is there a commonality or divergence between the suggested method(s) for promoting critical-thinking?
- How have scholars' approaches for promoting critical-thinking changed (if at all)?

## Results

The findings of this study are reported in three patterns as to have a role in promoting critical-thinking in social studies classrooms. As the findings are reported, however, certain limitations must be kept in mind.

First of all, this study is limited by the three major journals of NCSS - *Social Education*, *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, and *Middle Level Learning* - and by their articles, which were published between the years of 1977 and 2006. It is also limited by such identified words as *thinking*, *critical-thinking*, *decision-making*, and *problem solving* guided this study. Besides, the study has some limitations regarding the availability of mentioned journals. All three journals were not available for the whole thirty-year period. Specifically, the *Social Studies and the Young Learner* journal was available from 1988 and *Middle Level Learning*, focused on middle school grades, was available from 1998. The journal, *Social Education*, was the only journal available between 1977 and 2006.

In order to effectively promote critical-thinking in social studies classrooms, scholars of social studies predominantly suggested *active teaching methods*. Specifically, for the years of 1977-2006, the author identified three patterns, which have been consistent in published journal articles. These are:

1. *Discussions as a way to promote critical-thinking in classrooms*

2. *Use of writing as a way to promote critical-thinking in classrooms.*
3. *Use of questions as a way to promote critical-thinking in classrooms.*

Table 1 shows the most common classroom activities that scholars suggested within the three-decade period under study.

Table 1.

*Distribution of Common Classroom Activities that Scholars Suggested within the Three-Decade Period*

1977-1986	1987-1996	1997-2006
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions</li> <li>• Writing</li> <li>• Application of questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions</li> <li>• Writing</li> <li>• Asking questions - Why</li> <li>• Inquiry</li> <li>• Use of technology</li> <li>• Role playing, projects, mysteries, case studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions</li> <li>• Writing</li> <li>• Asking questions</li> <li>• Inquiry</li> <li>• Use of technology</li> <li>• Role playing, projects, simulations, literature based activities, service learning</li> </ul>

1. *Discussions as a way to promote critical-thinking in classrooms.*

One of the most frequently recurring patterns identified in all three decades was utilization of *classroom discussions*. Over the years, scholars have repeatedly indicated that a discussion, either in a small or large-group format, was essential and beneficial for the development of critical-thinking skills. This is mostly because discussions are based on social interactions, through which students can gain a deeper understanding of a particular topic, explore the broad range of alternative and even conflicting perspectives, and learn to deliberate, cooperate, and collaborate as well. In that sense, according to some scholars, discussions simply model the experience of the democratic way of living (Atwood & Wilen, 1991; Fertig, 1997).

Discussion, a rule-governed activity, encourages students to listen and be **responsive to others' perspectives, to consider alternative perspectives, weigh information, and to develop an understanding of and eventually a perspective on a topic being discussed**. So, on one hand, discussions are perceived as necessary avenues for students to learn and construct social studies content knowledge so that they can talk about or discuss an issue (Larson, 1997). On the other hand, discussions **are also considered essential to learn from others, consider others' viewpoints, and to confront their own points of view as well as others' perceptions, misconceptions, and even stereotypes**.

Over the years, various social studies contents and resources have been perceived as valuable for discussion. Public policy issues, children's literature, everyday issues, cultural artifacts, photographs, a dilemma, a controversial topic, a political cartoon, newspapers, news broadcasts, values or an abstract topic, historical books and artifacts, letters, diaries, movies, etc. are just a few examples. As the literature indicated, these various contents and resources could be used in numerous ways with a discussion.

For instance, children's literature could be used to have children talk about books or to examine stereotypical images in them, to discuss different perspectives and biases of authors in written words or to reconstruct the past by comparing interpretations written from a variety of perspectives and examining the evidence. Similarly, a guest speaker who is invited to share his or her experiences or perspectives on an issue might open up a discussion in which students weigh the speaker's answers against other sources of information, develop reasons to defend their thinking, and hear, understand, and consider opinions that are both similar and dissimilar to their own.

As for the discussion approaches, the concept of *thinking hats* (see Lynch & McKenna, 1990) is one example in which different students can be designated to wear specific hats - six hypothetical color-coded hats similar to six perspectives on a controversial issue - and make corresponding ideas to a discussion. A group of scholars suggested *the discussion web* and *conversational discussion groups* (see Bean, Kile, & Readence, 1996) specifically for high-school students. In the *discussion web* approach, students work on clarifying thinking by eliminating inconsistencies and contradictions in their thinking processes. To do so, they - in pairs - think about the pros and cons of the major character's decision and write down as many reasons as possible. In this way, students are able to look at both sides of the issue. Trying to work toward a consensus, students compare their reasons with another pair of students and once they reach it, they select one reason that best represents their group's thinking about the issue. Finally, each group's speaker presents its conclusion to the whole class for their consideration.

In parallel, a *conversational discussion group* is based on a set of three question types - background-knowledge question, transition-to-the-text question, and beyond-the-text question. Once students deal with the questions, they engage in a conversation concerning their responses. During the conversation, students comment, provide feedback, challenge each other's conclusions and also defend and discuss their interpretations.

## 2. Use of writing as a way to promote critical-thinking in classrooms.

The other pattern identified concerning facilitating critical-thinking in classrooms was *writing activities*. Over the years, social studies scholars have predominantly agreed on the fact that writing activities are essential for the development of students' critical-thinking skills (Beyer, 1977; Giroux, 1979; Hoge, 1988; Ladenburg & Tegnell, 1986; Margolis, Shapiro, & Anderson, 1990; O'Day, 1994). Many of these scholars indicated that writing involves mental manipulation of numerous forms of

data (e.g., graphs, pictures, spoken or written words), demands to differentiate between essential and non-essential information, and examination of one's own assumptions on an ongoing basis. So, writing simply helps one to think interpretively and critically about the content as well (Giroux, 1979).

Some scholars noted that the strong connection between critical-thinking and writing constantly led many scholars to support various forms of writing activities, including draft writing, reflective writing, persuasive writing, letter writing, writing essays or responses, pre-writing or writing dialogical position papers (arguing for both sides of an issue) to be practiced either as a primary focus of the lesson or as supplementary for content learning. They also provided numerous ways to incorporate them into social studies.

For instance, in a *reflective writing*, students might reflect on a classroom speaker, on a book, or on a topic about the economy from their personal experience, as well as reflect on a local issue. They might even write responses to the questions the teacher posed on a particular topic. Other writing activities, such as *pre-writing* - e.g., the questions that students prepare in advance for a speaker, and write down to explore what they know about the subject or about the upcoming classroom discussions - function as pre-thinking and provide students the time and ability to carefully think out a concept or question.

*Talking back* activities (see Margolis, et al., 1990) are the ones in which students talk back with their writing to an individual, for instance, to an editor or a corresponding columnist about a particular topic. Accordingly, students talk back about it with their writing. In persuasive writing, on the other hand, students might be involved in a writing activity with regard to their position on a certain issue, e.g., constitution issue.

Similarly, when asked to reconstruct the events of the past to create a historical narrative or write a letter, scholars suggested that students— even the young ones— need to develop background knowledge. To do so, the students should engage with various kinds of sources (e.g., read and discuss letters, diaries, and journals written by people who were eyewitnesses to events relating to the subject of study) to gather information, to compare and contrast, to find evidence of their position or author bias, to assume roles of individuals in the historical period being studied, and then to begin building and writing up their own interpretations of the past event. Students might even be asked to jot down in their journals any personal reactions to the key character or the key historical person who had to make critical choices and act on these decisions; eventually they are asked to consider what they might do in the same situation.

Over the years scholars have repeatedly emphasized writing activities simply because they allow a student - the writer - to produce a record of his or her thinking. They have also pointed out that one of the great advantages of writing activities is that they can be transferred easily and naturally to other areas of curriculum, and teachers can modify them for students at all ages and various developmental levels.

Essentially, a writing activity is commonly viewed as a crucial tool for students to **think and to think thoroughly** (Gallavan, 1997; Fulwiler & McGuire, 1997; O'Day, 1994).

### 3. Use of questions as a way to promote critical-thinking in classrooms.

The third pattern identified is the *application of questions* in social studies classrooms. Social studies scholars indicate that questions help students develop a deep understanding of the content and improve critical-thinking and problem-solving skills (Fulwiler & McGuire, 1997). Regardless of the content focus, whether it was a topic related to economics, or a real life dilemma, asking questions of students and helping them learn to ask questions themselves is considered an important way to facilitate critical-thinking skills (Mackey, 1977; Hunkins, 1985; Kownslar, 1985; McFarland, 1985; Hoge, 1988; Walsh, 1988; Haas, 1988; O'Reilly, 1991). In fact, according to Walsh (1988), being disposed to a question is the initial step for critical-thinking.

For example, when solving a historical or geographical mystery, questions guide students and provide them clues. Similarly, questions are also used to initiate, guide, and facilitate any kind of classroom discussions. However, in relation to asking questions, scholars also made a distinction between quality and quantity. They attached more importance to the quality of questions than quantity. That is, asking higher-level questions to students, such as analysis or synthesis type of questions – e.g., why and how – in contrast to asking simple recall – what or comprehension-type questions is particularly emphasized. At the same time, having students learn to ask their own questions and search for answers is perceived as essential.

In the previous section above, the author discussed three patterns identified in the data concerning the teaching of critical-thinking. In the following section, she will discuss two irregular patterns, which were noted as having a role in the teaching of critical-thinking, reflected in the data source. These are:

- *Role of Technological developments and Inquiry*
- *Role of Classroom context*

#### *Role of Technological developments and Inquiry in Promoting Critical-Thinking.*

Beginning with the second decade (1987-1996), technological developments exerted an impact on suggested methods of teaching critical-thinking, which steadily continued within the last decade with a growing emphasis as well. An increasing number of scholars suggested the application of technology (e.g., computers) and creating a technology assisted-environment (e.g., Internet, web discussion groups) **for facilitating students' critical-thinking skills** (Bean et al., 1996; Saye, 1998; Mason, 1999; Keiper, 1999; Swain, Sharpe, & Dawson, 2003). As some scholars identified, this was particularly because technology is interactive and flexible. It provides more independent time for students and expands time in a classroom as well (Saye, 1998).

Additionally, some scholars emphasized the importance of inquiry for teaching critical-thinking. Some of these scholars used questioning and inquiry together and perceived the skills of *questioning* and *inquiry* as important aspects of thinking.

Questioning and inquiry were simply considered crucial for gathering complete information, and searching and establishing well-reasoned and informed perspectives or opinions (Poling, 2000; Lapham, 2003; Sperry, 2006). Others perceived use of the inquiry as similar to what social scientists employ to collect data, to assess the quality of data, and to use data to interpret events essential for promoting critical-thinking.

*Role of classroom context on promoting critical-thinking.*

The role of the classroom atmosphere on discussions thus facilitating critical-thinking was identified as a new and an emerging issue of the first decade. Toward the end of the first decade, one scholar indicated, "...discussion is facilitated by a comfortable atmosphere created when students do not have to find one right answer and when they are not judged for voicing their opinion" (Davis, 1984, p. 570). But, scholars' emphasis on classroom characteristics became more visible within the second decade, in particular.

Specifically, some scholars identified that there was a connection between students' intellectual functioning and social context (Parker, 1988; Gabelko, 1988; Eeds & Wells, 1991). These small groups of scholars also perceived that the social atmosphere of the classroom should be pluralistic to protect everybody's rights, be democratic, prevent personal attacks and be safe enough that students can freely exchange their ideas, take risks with their thoughts, and accept and appreciate individual differences (Parker, 1988; Walsh, 1988; Lynch & McKenna, 1990).

One of the reasons for this change on scholars' perception of classroom context in facilitating critical-thinking could be the research project conducted by Fred Newmann and his associates concerning thinking in social studies education and classroom thoughtfulness (e.g., Newmann, 1990). Another reason might be the works of D'Angelo (1971) and Nickerson (1988). However, many scholars of the last decade did not specifically identify the role of classroom atmosphere in promoting and learning critical-thinking in social studies classrooms.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Despite the long advocacy for critical-thinking in social studies, research findings and literature reviews have consistently shown its absence in practice. In this study, the author analyzed the thirty years of three major journals of NCSS to identify approaches that social studies scholars believed or suggested as more likely and predictive of success in teaching of critical-thinking in social studies classrooms. The findings of this study indicated mostly commonality but some divergence in scholars' approaches for teaching critical-thinking in social studies classrooms as well. Specifically, the researcher found three patterns – *classroom discussions*, *writing activities*, and *questions* – persisted and are considered essential for promoting critical-thinking in social studies classrooms. In fact, these three patterns frequently emphasized various times within a thirty-year time frame.

*Classroom discussions*, organized either in a large or small group format, are believed to be essential to promote critical-thinking (Beyer, 1977; Davis, 1984; Kownslar, 1985; Walsh, 1988; Gabelko, 1988; Shelly & Wilen, 1988; Guyton, 1991; Eeds & Wells, 1991; Bean et al. 1996; Larson, 1997; Saye, 1998). As many scholars indicated, discussions simply model the experience of the democratic way of living (Atwood & Wilen, 1991; Fertig, 1997). Because of its nature, *writing activities* require **mental manipulation of data, demands examination of one's own assumptions on an ongoing basis, and examination of one's position on a certain topic or defending it**. Therefore, writing activities are identified as an important tool for students to think by many scholars (Beyer, 1977; Gallavan, 1997; Giroux, 1979; Fulwiler & McGuire, 1997; Margolis, et al, 1990; O'Day, 1994). *Asking questions* to students was identified as the third pattern in this study. Asking questions to students, especially higher-level questions (e.g., analysis or synthesis type of questions) as well as having students learn to ask their own questions is perceived as essential way to facilitate critical-thinking skills (Mackey, 1977; Hunkins, 1985; Kownslar, 1985; McFarland, 1985; Hoge, 1988; Walsh, 1988; Haas, 1988; O'Reilly, 1991).

In addition to three common patterns mentioned above, the researcher identified *technological developments* and *inquiry*, and *classroom context* as irregular patterns. Specifically, technological developments and inquiry emerged within the second decade and continued on the following decade. On the other hand, *classroom context* emerged toward the end of the first decade but emphasized more in the second decade in particular. **The researcher finds this change in scholars' perspective on classroom context interesting**. Even though social studies scholars consistently emphasized the importance of classroom discussions, numerous forms of writing activities, and asking questions, they did not allocate same amount of attention to the classroom context to make such rich discussions and expressions a possibility. In that sense, many scholars did not identify role of classroom atmosphere in promoting and learning critical-thinking in social studies classrooms.

Over the years, scholars who write extensively about critical-thinking emphasize over and over that promoting critical-thinking in classrooms is neither a panacea nor an upshot of regular instruction or happens by coincidence. It happens as a result of conscious and careful planning, effort, and commitment, so it demands special attention. Therefore, social studies teachers, who want to teach critical-thinking skills, need to organize discussions either in a small or large group format, incorporate numerous forms of writing activities into their daily classroom routine, and keep asking more higher level questions than simple recall or memorization questions. They also need to integrate technological applications such as Internet and **web discussion groups into classroom activities to facilitate students' critical-thinking skills**. However, more studies are needed to examine the effects of discussions, writing activities, and questions on the development of critical-thinking skills. Additionally, the role of classroom context or classroom atmosphere should also be investigated.

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## Sosyal Bilgiler Eğitiminde Eleştirel Düşünme Nasıl Öğretilmeli: Üç NCSS Dergisinin İncelenmesi

### Atıf:

- Karabulut, Ü.S. (2012). How to teach critical-thinking in social studies education: an examination of three NCSS journals. *Eğitim Araştırmaları- Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 49, 197-214.

### (Özet)

#### *Problem Durumu*

Eleştirel düşünmeyi öğretmek sosyal bilgiler eğitiminin önemli amaçlarından biridir. Sosyal bilgiler alanyazını incelendiğinde eleştirel düşüncenin öneminin sürekli vurgulandığı, yıllar boyunca eleştirel düşünceyi öğretmekle ilgili birçok makalenin yayımlandığı ve dolayısıyla geniş bir literatür kaynağının birikmiş olduğu görülür. Fakat bu bilgi birikimine rağmen, sosyal bilgiler alanında eleştirel düşünceyi öğretme konusunda yapılmış araştırmalar bu alanda süregelen başarısızlığı da ortaya koymaktadır.

#### *Araştırmanın Amacı*

Bu çalışmanın temel amacı *Social Studies*, *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, ve *Middle Level Learning* adıyla NCSS tarafından yayımlanmakta olan üç büyük dergiyi inceleyerek sosyal bilgiler eğitiminde eleştirel düşünmeyi öğretmek için başarılı olduğuna inanılan sınıf uygulamalarının ve bu alanda araştırmalar yapmış, sosyal bilgiler alanına yön veren kişiler tarafından önerilmiş yöntemlerin belirlenmesidir. İkinci amaç da, eleştirel düşünceyi öğretmekle ilgili oluşmuş otuz yıllık kapsamlı bilgi birikimine ulaşip analiz etmek ve bu bilgi kaynağını sosyal bilgiler eğitimi alanı çalışanlarının istifadesine sunmaktır.

### *Araştırmanın Yöntemi*

Bu çalışmada tarihsel analiz yöntemi kullanılmıştır. NCSS tarafından çıkarılan söz konusu üç dergide 1977 ve 2006 tarihleri arasında yayınlanmış olan makaleler belirlenmiş, incelenmiş, ve analiz edilmiştir.

Araştırmanın ilk basamağında sosyal bilgiler alanında yapılmış araştırmalara ve daha önceki literatür taramalarına dayanılarak (örneğin Cornbleth, 1985; Parker, 1991; McKay ve Gibson, 2004) düşünme, eleştirel düşünme, karar verme, ve problem çözme terimleri anahtar kelimeler olarak belirlenmiştir. Adı geçen dergilerin arşivlerine ulaşılarak bu anahtar kelimeler araştırılmış ve ardından ilgili makaleler tespit edilmiştir.

Belirlenmiş 30 yıllık zaman aralığında *Social Studies*, *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, ve *Middle Level Learning* dergilerinde yayımlanmış makaleler arasından toplam yüz otuz iki (132) makale seçildi ve şu sorulara cevap bulunmak için kullanılmıştır: yıllar boyunca hangi öğretme yöntem veya yöntemleri sosyal bilgiler araştırmacıları tarafından eleştirel düşünceyi öğretmek için faydalı bulunmuş veya önerilmiştir? Araştırmacılar hangi yöntemleri vurgulamışlardır? Eleştirel düşünceyi öğretmek için sosyal bilgiler araştırmacılarının önerdikleri yöntem veya yöntemler arasında bir ortaklık veya farklılık var mıdır? Yıllar boyunca sosyal bilgiler araştırmacılarının eleştirel düşünceyi öğretmek ile ilgili yaklaşımları değişmiş midir?

### *Araştırmanın Bulguları*

Yayınlanmış makalelerin analizlerinin sonunda eleştirel düşünmeyi öğretmekle ilgili araştırmacıların genel olarak aynı öğretim metotlarını tekrar ettikleri ve bir takım ortak noktaları vurguladıkları sonucuna ulaşıldı. İncelenen makalelerde tekrar eden öğretim yöntemleri belirlenerek ve bunlar üç başlık altında toplandı. Otuz yıllık süreçte yayınlanmış makalelerde araştırmacılar eleştirel düşünmeyi öğretmek için *aktif öğretim metotlarını* tekrar etmiş ve eleştirel düşünmeyi öğretmek için

- 1- *tartışma yöntemlerinin* kullanılmasını,
- 2- *yazma etkinliklerinin* kullanılmasını,
- 3- *soru sormanın* kullanılmasını önermişlerdir.

Bunun yanı sıra 1987 den başlayan ve devamındaki yirmi yıllık süreçte eleştirel düşünceyi öğretmek için *teknolojinin* ve *sorgulama yönteminin* kullanılması vurgulanmıştır. Bu bulguların yanı sıra sınıf atmosferinin gerekli ilgiyi almadığı görülmüştür.

### *Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Öneriler*

Bu çalışmada sosyal bilgiler sınıflarında eleştirel düşünmeyi öğretmek için tartışma metotlarının, yazma etkinliklerinin ve soru sorma yönteminin kullanılmasının gerekliliği bulunmuştur. Her ne kadar otuz yıllık bilgi birikiminin analiz bulguları bu üç yöntemi vurgulamış olsa da bu yöntemlerin sosyal bilgiler dersinde

uygulanmasının öğrencilerin eleştirel düşünme becerisi üzerindeki etkisinin nicel ve nitel araştırma yöntemleri kullanılarak incelenmesine ihtiyaç vardır. Buna ek olarak sınıf atmosferinin de eleştirel düşünme üzerindeki etkisi de araştırılmalıdır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Eleştirel düşünme, eleştirel düşünmeyi öğretme yöntemleri, sosyal bilgiler eğitimi ve NCSS dergileri.