

Study on the First Appearance of Social Studies in the Elementary School Program in Turkey

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Abstract

This article describes the nature of the Social Studies program taught in the form of a class in Turkey. We use the 1968 elementary school program, where social studies were mentioned for the first time in an official program. For this purpose, we formally explained the interpretation of the concept of social studies for the first time in elementary school programs by using a document analysis showing what social studies are, where they stand in the program, what they consist of, and what the pedagogical understanding regarding Social Studies teaching and education processes is. The study used document analysis, a qualitative research method, to analyze data collected from the 1968 elementary school program, which is a primary source. Moreover, we created categories in line with the questions posed in this project and interpreted the data accordingly.

Results reveal that Social Studies teaching began as a separate class at elementary schools in 1968 and the nature of social studies is clouded with the pedagogical concern that 9–10-year-old individuals could comprehend teaching topics only with an interdisciplinary approach. When Social Studies classes first appeared in elementary schools in Turkey, individuals' needs and involvement with the environment was emphasized, focusing on subject and citizenship. Remarkably, the methods, techniques, and resources to be used in teaching the classes were diverse. It is observed that the Social Studies class embodied the goals of becoming patriotic, economically productive, and socially harmonic individuals.

Keywords: elementary school program, history of social studies education, social studies class, social studies curriculum, social studies education

1. Introduction

Social studies, which place active citizenship at its core, interact with multiple disciplines due to the diversity of skills and qualifications a citizen needs to have. As a result of its interdisciplinary structure, social studies have not only different definitions but also different content descriptions. An important milestone at the foundation of the definitions and descriptions of the concept of social studies in Turkey is the fact that there is a class called “social studies” at the elementary school level, which makes the concept of social studies a subject of more vigorous research in Turkey. Striking developments regarding the nature and goals of social studies actually emerged in the US. For example, Ravitch (2003, p. 2) indicated that the term “social studies” was unknown until 1913 when social studies were mentioned as a new discipline upon the publication of a report on the reorganization of secondary education in the US. It is important for the philosophical origin of social studies that in the year before, 1912, the Committee on Social Studies, as a sub-committee of the [American] National Education Association, which prepares school curricula, was founded; its name was changed to “Committee on Social Studies” by Thomas Jesse Jones who was assigned as the president of the committee in 1913; he is also the person who used the term “social studies” by referring to school subjects in 1905 (Ross, 2006, p. 18; Saxe, 1991, p. 16).

Following the 1913 report of the [American] National Education Association, close connections between social studies and citizenship education were pointed out in the Citizenship Education Report published in 1915, and the idea that the goal of social studies is to provide citizenship education was defended with the Social Studies in Secondary Education Report published in 1916 (Broom & Evans, 2014, p. 56). This report is considered by some as the starting point of social studies and placed a lot of emphasis on current issues, social problems, recent history, and students' interests and needs (Evans, 2004, p. 21). It also determined the direction of social studies education (Cogan, 1976, p. 294) and introduced social studies as a consistent educational reform movement (Fallace, 2016,

p. 182) while also flexibly conceptualizing social studies, which were considered a study of social sciences and history to raise good citizens (Broom & Evans, 2014, p. 56). Thus, in 1916, the importance of both studying the past and involving the current events in the program and deciding accordingly was emphasized (Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 2013, p. 89). In the first few years, some found the subjects of history, geography, and citizenship in the social studies program as unnecessary, and some academic debates were conducted over whether the emphasis on historical topics in the program should be decreased and social studies should be placed to counter history (Öztürk & Dilek, 2005, p. 80). Therefore, the popularity of social studies, which had a limited yet important past until 1913, did not significantly increase until the mid-1920s and 1930s (Saxe, 1991, p.16). Starting from the 1920s, other disciplines of social sciences also gained more prominence in social studies. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) was established in the US in 1921, and several institutions and associations produced publications related to social studies education during the 1930s (Aslan, 2016, p. 17). Under the effects of the events of the period, debates were conducted about social studies during the 1930s and the 1950s (Broom & Evans, 2014, p. 63). With the launching of the Sputnik by the Soviet Union in 1957, Americans started to associate the school system with technological race and this was the ultimate incident causing a serious change in the Social Studies curriculum (Byford & Russell, 2007, p. 40). The reactions to this change led to the emergence of the “new social studies” movement based on inquiry (Broom & Evans, 2014, p. 63). The fundamental hypothesis of the “new social studies” movement is the understanding that “it would be more beneficial to acquire the basic concepts and knowledge-producing methods of the disciplines of social sciences.” Accordingly, the concept of social studies started to be used synonymously with social sciences as a type of disciplinary approach that was adopted before the emergence of the concept of social studies (Doğanay, 2008, p. 79). This movement started losing popularity during the 1970s and the traditional approaches regained strength in the 1980s; moreover, in the second half of the 1990s, the NCSS decided to adopt the goals, contents, and methods close to the suggestions of the “new social studies” movement (Öztürk & Devenci, 2011, p. 12).

When we note the historical progress of social studies in Turkey, we find that social studies began to be taught in schools as a separate class with the 1968 elementary school program. Although the topics covered by these classes were taught at schools under various disciplines, the concept of “social studies” was defined with the 1968 elementary school program, where topics of “history, geography, and citizenship” were gathered under social studies. This defined not only the topics that were “directly” included in the definition and scope of the Social Studies classes but also the main goal of social studies education. Before 1968, during the Republican period, programs were prepared for the elementary schools in 1924, 1926, 1936, and 1948, and the draft program for elementary schools was applied from 1962 until 1968 in addition to the programs for village schools.

The abolition of many different classes taught at the first, second, and third grades of elementary school in 1926, their revolutionary replacement with the Life Studies class, and the belief in collective education accelerated the transition from a topic-based approach to interdisciplinary approach toward social studies (Ata, 2009, p. 32). The concepts of collective education and vocational school, in addition to Life Studies, are the recommendations of John Dewey, who came to Turkey in 1924, for the 1926 elementary school program (Ata, 1998). In the 1936 elementary school program, “based on the belief that students would not be able to analyze different aspects of events belonging to various disciplines by classifying them separately” (Ministry of Culture, 1936, p. 31), collective education continued in line with the topics included in the Life Studies class for the first three years of the elementary school. However, this was the case in fourth and fifth grades, where different disciplines were taught individually; however, it was mentioned in the program that teachers should pay attention to associate topics of each class with those of other classes. In the 1948 elementary school program, the Life Studies class was included in the program of the first three grades and the purpose of this class was to make it possible for the students “to see objects and events holistically” (Ministry of National Education, 1948, p. 20). Although different chapters were taught as separate classes in fourth and fifth grades, teachers would attract attention to the close relationship and tight connections among these classes. This relationship and connection between the classes manifested themselves in the program description of each class, showing which classes it should relate to. In this regard, the program indicated that the history class should be connected to the citizenship class; the geography class to the history, citizenship, and arithmetic classes; the citizenship class to the history class; and the family studies class to other classes, particularly to the nature studies, painting, arithmetic, and geometry classes (Ministry of National Education, 1948). These connections between the classes manifested themselves as connections among the topics taught as separate classes in the fourth and fifth grades instead of being gathered under the “Life Studies” module and taught together in the first three grades of the elementary school. In the draft program for elementary schools which was put into practice at specified schools in 1962, a new class called “Society and Country Studies” was included in the program for the first time. Accordingly, the principle of establishing tight connections among the classes adopted for the fourth and fifth grades in the previous years led to the gathering of

some of these classes under a single class. Therefore, history, geography, and citizenship classes, which used to be taught separately in the fourth and fifth grades, were gathered under the Society and Country Studies class. Although all these classes were united under a single class in the 1962 draft program for elementary schools, the “Considerations” section of the module mentioned history, citizenship, and geography topics separately. Although the definition was based on history, citizenship, and geography, the Society and Country Studies class as a unified form of the various disciplines in the program is a very important development for social studies. In the 1968 elementary school program, which followed the 1962 draft program, the classes taught separately as “history, geography, citizenship” were united under the name of “social studies.” Thus, social studies entered in history of Turkish education as a separate class taught at the elementary school level.

With the introduction of a class called “social studies” in Turkish elementary school programs for the first time in 1968, efforts to create standards for social studies and social studies education started both institutionally and in practice. The debates over the nature, goals, and contents of social studies since its inception under this name influenced the establishment of the above-mentioned standards. Evans (2004, p. 1) argued that social studies were enigmatic and called the history of social studies as the story of a war where advocates, philosophy, ideas, and educational practices try to dominate each other. Therefore, these different areas of domination mentioned by Evans are worth being separately examined. This study covers the philosophical aspects of the concept of social studies and is a historical research to determine the place of the Social Studies class of the 1968 elementary school program, where topics covered by the concept were included in the program directly under the title of social studies and were no longer taught as separate disciplines. The introduction of a class called “social studies” to the elementary school program in Turkey for the first time in 1968 is a significant reference point for the definition of the concept of social studies. This reference point used in defining the concept was created on a foundation built around history, geography, and citizenship. Therefore, the 1968 elementary school program is special not only because it defined the concept of social studies but also with a view to the history of the Social Studies class.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to determine the place of the 1968 elementary school program in terms of its concepts, goals, content, and educational approaches. In this regard, we tried to answer the following questions with reference to the 1968 elementary school program: How was the Social Studies class included? What was the goal of the Social Studies class? How was the content of the Social Studies classes created? How was social studies education provided?

2. Method

In this research, we used document analysis, a qualitative research method and widely used technique for categorizing, examining, and interpreting written documents and defining the limitations of various resources (Payne and Payne, 2004, p. 60). The data was collected from the 1968 elementary school program, which is a primary source. The said program was prepared and published by the Ministry of National Education, Turkey, in 1968. The data was analyzed using content analysis. Bailey (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p. 227) argue that cases where documents alone constitute the research data could be analyzed in four stages in four stages: (1) sampling from the subject data, (2) developing categories, (3) determining the unit of analysis, and (4) digitalization. In this study, data analysis was conducted in the light of these stages. At the first stage, we did not create a sample from the data; instead, we analyzed the entire 1968 elementary school program. At the second stage, we determined four main categories (place of the Social Studies class, its goals, its content, and social studies education) according to the sub-problems of our study. At the third stage, the words and contents of the document were determined as units of analysis; thus, we determined the data to be analyzed under each category at the general level. We conducted a content analysis of the data under each category and tabulated and interpreted the data accordingly. At the fourth stage, the analysis results were reported in prose without any digitalization. At this last stage, there is no need for the digitalization and quantification of the analysis results, which can also be reported in prose (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p. 230). Moreover, the reports in prose were supported through direct quotes from document.

3. Findings

The research findings have been analyzed under four titles: “place of the Social Studies class in the 1968 elementary school program, goals of the Social Studies class in the 1968 elementary school program, content of the Social Studies class in the 1968 elementary school program, and teaching of the Social Studies class in the 1968 elementary school program.”

3.1 Place of the Social Studies Class in the 1968 Elementary School Program

The 1968 elementary school program is the approved version of the 1962 draft program for elementary schools,

which was tested at specific schools starting from the 1962–1963 academic year, improved according to the obtained results, and revised for the last time at the “Elementary School Program Assessment Seminar” between April 25 and 30, 1968, in Ankara. It was approved with the decision no. 171 dated July 1, 1968, of the Turkish Board of Education (Talim ve Terbiye Kurulu-TTK) (TTK Docket, 1968, Decision No: 171). The 1968 elementary school program was put into practice at all schools during the 1968–1969 academic year. According to the program, the classes to be taught from the first to the fifth grades of the elementary school were Turkish, Mathematics, Painting, Music, Physical Education, Educational Studies, Life Studies (limited to the first, second, and third grades), Religious Studies (limited to the fourth and fifth grades), Science and Natural Studies (limited to the fourth and fifth grades), and Social Studies (limited to the fourth and fifth grades). In this program, there were separate descriptions about weekly schedules to be adopted in normal and double shift education as well as in multi-grade classes, and the duration of the classes was planned as two different time slots—either 40 or 60 minutes. Twenty minutes before the class were dedicated to the revision and planning of daily activities and lessons, and 30 minutes during weekdays and 50 minutes on Saturdays after the class to assess daily activities and determine what to do on the next day. The Social Studies class was 240 minutes long for fourth graders; however, it was 200 minutes long for fifth graders. These 40 minutes deducted from the Social Studies class were added to the mathematics class.

The goals, descriptions, and chapters of the Social Studies class and a list of the tools to be used to teach this class were detailed in the 1968 elementary school program that also aimed at realizing the overall goals of the Turkish national education and elementary school system in accordance with certain principles and rules. These principles and rules included information about the Social Studies class. In this context, the 1968 elementary school program included the Social Studies class under the titles “Teaching and Learning Principles at Elementary Schools” and “General Principles about the Application of the Program.”

In the 1968 elementary school program, the Social Studies class was discussed under the themes “wholeness of the disciplines, appropriateness for children, establishing a link to social life, and raising awareness about being a Turk.” Wholeness of the disciplines, listed among the aforementioned themes, was considered in connection with the mental development of the child and led to the Social Studies class to become a common ground for different disciplines, which was found appropriate for children. This was mentioned in the program in the section in which the main principles to be considered while achieving the goals of elementary education were explained in 23 articles, under the heading “*Education and Learning Principles of the Elementary School*,” and in which the collective education rules related to a child’s learning process were also explained. Accordingly, it was stated that the consolidation provided with the Life Studies classes at the first stage of the elementary school program in the past, in accordance with the principle of collective education, should be carried out in the Social Studies class together with the Science and Nature Studies classes at the second stage of the elementary school program:

An elementary school child cannot comprehend objects, events, and information to be taught to them as organized according to different disciplines. Due to the characteristics of this specific age, they generally comprehend objects and events collectively. Therefore, it was deemed compulsory to consolidate the classes, which were consolidated around the Life Studies classes at the first stage until now and around the Social Studies and Science and Nature Studies classes at the stage (Ministry of National Education, 1968, p. 16).

The “Explanations” section, where the concept of social studies was defined, contained the following: “The topics taught at fourth and fifth grades of the elementary school, under the names of ‘History, Geography, Citizenship’ were brought together under the name of ‘Social Studies’ due to the close relations they have among each other and their appropriateness for the child” (Ministry of National Education, 1968, p. 65). In fact, this was also explained in the lines under the heading “Explanations on Child Development and Education,” which provided help and guidance to parents, teachers, and those who are responsible for child development in terms of getting to know and understand children. It is stated in the 1968 elementary school program that this section was prepared by considering the research results. In this section, the ages of 6–9 were stated as appropriate for the first, second, and third grades, the ages of 9–11 were stated as appropriate for fourth and fifth grades. The section included the following statements regarding the mental development of children between the ages of 6–9: “At this stage, children perceive their environment as a whole. They are unable to analyze the things they see. They have not yet developed reasoning or abstract thinking abilities. Therefore, they cannot grasp subjects that have been classified based on scientific reasoning” (Ministry of National Education, 1968, p. 372). The following sentence was included in the section about the mental development of children between the ages of 9–11: “A child at the age of 10 or 11 would have developed mentally enough to comprehend concepts of location as well as certain historical and geographical events” (Ministry of National Education, 1968, p. 383).

The theme of establishing links with social life was mentioned as follows: “The Social Studies class should

primarily urge individuals, living as a part of the society, to be respectful, warm-hearted, and understanding toward others and to cooperate with others as well as to respect one another's views and opinions and appreciate one another's success" (Ministry of National Education, 1968, p. 67). The theme of social life emerged with the discussion of the rights and duties of citizens, and the relationship between the rights and duties of citizens was explained by using examples of the sacrifices of the Turkish citizens in history while teachers were also urged to suggest that students made the highest possible sacrifices for national duties.

The theme of raising awareness about being a Turk is explained by pointing out that teachers should use Social Studies classes as a tool to help students fulfill national goals, and what teachers should do in the Social Studies classes was explained as follows:

For instance, the duty of the teacher in a Social Studies class is to not only teach some topics but also teach students with the help of current examples that the Turkish nation has lived independently since ancient times, has spread its culture across other nations, and has provided other nations with good examples about every aspect of life, teaching them ways to live more happily and more comfortably, adding that the Turkish nation has made grand sacrifices to realize highly civilized life all around the world. In this class, the students will not only understand the stages of advancement that humanity has gone through but will also be able to comprehend the big role played by Turks in the realization of this advancement. Thus, students' loyalty toward their own nations will be reinforced as they will also be able to better comprehend what duties our nation must fulfill for the humanity today and in the future. (Ministry of National Education, 1968, p. 9)

As can be understood from the expressions quoted above, the Social Studies class was perceived as a tool to explain the past as well as current place of the Turkish nation. In addition, it was mentioned that the Social Studies class should be used to talk about the efforts undertaken under the leadership of Atatürk, being a citizen of the Republic of Turkey, and to teach about national institutions and being loyal and respectful to individuals as well as being ready to make sacrifices for the sake of national duties (Ministry of National Education, 1968, p. 10).

3.2 Goals of the Social Studies Class in the 1968 Elementary School Program

No matter how they are expressed, general and special goals are the building blocks of any education program (Erden, 1998, p. 24). The goals of programs are important because they determine the qualifications that would be accordingly acquired by the individuals that would be raised. The Minister of National Education, İlhami Ertem, explained the goal of the 1968 elementary school program in his speech he held during the Elementary Education Week:

"The most outstanding commitment of this program, which is an important stage of our educational background, is its goal of raising youngsters loyal to the national character and ideal. This ideal is to gather each and every individual of the Turkish nation around the idea of national consciousness as an indivisible whole, sharing fate, pleasure and worries; to improve the national, ethical, and humanitarian values of these individuals; to teach them that the Republic of Turkey is a national, democratic, secular, and social law state, respecting human rights and that individuals are equal before the public without being discriminated because of their language, ethnicity, gender, political views, religion, and denominations; to tell them that the family is the foundation of the Turkish society; and to raise individuals who are loyal to the revolutions of Atatürk, respectful to the laws and regulations and toward their elderly, loving toward the younger ones, aware of their responsibilities, considerate toward the Turkish history and prominent Turkish leaders and who believe that it is possible to become a contemporary civilization through 'positive sciences'" (Tebliğler Dergisi [Journal of Tebliğler (Official Bulletin of Ministry of National Education)], 1968, p. 435).

The expressed goal was discussed in the 1968 elementary school program under the title "The Goals of the Turkish national Education" where goals are explained, and it was also mentioned where the characteristics of the "type of citizen who would help improve national education." Moreover, the characteristics of this type of citizen to be raised were also determined using some social, personal, and economic goals. It was accepted as a basis that these general goals regarding the Turkish national education should be taught to individuals in accordance with the goals listed separately regarding "personal relations, human relations, economic life, and social life" under the title "Goals of Elementary Education" (Ministry of National Education, 1968, p. 3-8).

The goals of the Social Studies class comprised 28 articles under four main headings in the 1968 elementary school program. The said four main headings determined as crucial for students' learning of the topics of the Social Studies class according to the 1968 elementary school program were as follows: "raising an awareness of the duties and responsibilities of being a citizen, learning about and adopting the inter-individual relations in the society, developing the ability to know the environment and the world, and developing one's skills using the idea of living economically." The goal stated in 28 articles under the said four main headings can be examined around five

themes by analyzing the contents of their mission statements. The criteria used to determine the theme of “raising an awareness of national unity and consciousness” were commitment to the state, including patriotism, awareness of national unity and consciousness; the criteria used to determine the concepts of theme of “individual values” were situations effecting the behavior of the society in relation to its continuity; the criteria used to determine the concepts of theme of “social values” were types of behavior and thinking in social life and the process of socialization; the criteria used to determine the concepts of the theme of “mental process achievements” were related to the status of mental development; the criteria used to determine the concepts of theme of “acquiring skills and abilities” were the processes related to work, duty, and activities. Figure 1 below shows the themes created on the basis of the aforementioned criteria:



Figure 1. Themes of the goals of the social studies class in the 1968 elementary school program

As the figure shows, the goals of the social studies education provided in accordance with the 1968 elementary school program focused on the themes of “raising an awareness of national unity and consciousness, individual values, social values, mental process achievements (knowledge and comprehension) and acquiring skills and abilities.” The following content analysis table shows the qualities that the Social Studies classes aimed to provide to individuals, under the above-mentioned themes:

Table 1. Qualities that individuals should have according to the 1968 social studies education program

Raising awareness of national unity and consciousness	Individual values	Social values	Mental process achievements	Acquiring skills and abilities
Turkish nation, flag, soldier, and military	Loyalty toward the family, nation, country, and Turkish revolutions and ideals	Group activities Helping others Air of liberty	Developing a character Acceptance	Being raised as a perfect individual
An honorable past	Undertaking duties and responsibilities	Rules of a democratic life	Developing emotions	Serving to the nation and the country with body and soul
Turkish revolution	Serving to the nation and the country with body and soul	Mutual rights and responsibilities of individuals	Learning Comprehension	Participating in group activities
Turkish leaders	Being a self-sacrificing Turkish person Being thrifty	Being respectful and tolerant toward views and beliefs	Having habits	Helping others Working together

Republican regime	Loyalty toward familial integrity	Working together, helping one another	Acquiring knowledge Understanding	Protecting economic values and national resources
A good citizen An effective citizen	The emotion and habit of following the laws and the state's authority	Family, school, and social life, living as a society	Feeling interest and love Examination Recognition	Decision-making, planning, using charts, and maps
Services of the Turkish nation to civilizations	Being hard-working and virtuous, exploring, analyzing	Country and environment, neighboring countries, countries around the world Protecting the democracy	Finding and extracting dependencies and relations Being able to implement	Carefully using objects and tools and protecting them The habit of studying as planned

As the table shows, the concepts “being a good and effective citizen, having an honorable past, characteristics of the Turkish nation, valuing the issues of the nation and country above everything else, services of the Turkish nation to civilizations” were prominent under the theme of “raising awareness of national unity and consciousness,” which is among the goals of the Social Studies class according to the 1968 elementary school program. The concepts “loyalty to the family, nation, country, Turkish revolutions and ideals, rights, and undertaking duties and responsibilities” were prominent under the theme of “individual values.” The concept “being able to recognize one’s country, society, and geographical environment, and the necessity of living together in a society” was prominent in the “social values” category. The “mental processes” category was overtaken by concepts related to mental processes from simple to complex and the “acquiring skills and abilities” category includes various concepts related to personal and social skills and abilities.

In addition to the goals of the Social Studies class directly mentioned in the 1968 elementary school program, the “Explanations” section for the class comprising 31 articles contained comments that were also related to the goals of the Social Studies class. Accordingly, the goals of the Social Studies class were raising national consciousness in the form of “attracting the attention of individuals to national problems, building feelings of duty toward and confidence in the nation and national duties,” and realizing social goals that aim teaching democratic attitudes such as “principles of the Turkish democracy and ways of protecting it.” In addition to these social goals, the Social Studies class also had individual goals aiming at personal development, expressed as “the role of being disciplined and having a sound character observing liberty, becoming a democratic citizen in the society, planning, and cooperating with friends, exchanging views and ideas and respecting one another’s views and ideas, the importance of having a profession appropriate for one’s skills, personal responsibility within a democratic environment, and valuing the personal opinion of children.”

3.3 Content of the Social Studies Class in the 1968 Elementary School Program

The content of the Social Studies class in the 1968 elementary school program reflect its orientation around “history, geography, and citizenship.” Topics covered by the Social Studies class were divided into chapters. This was expressed in the program as follows: “... topics were not determined separately for different disciplines and they have been integrated into the chapters considering the close relationship and tight connections among them.” The 1968 elementary school program, which qualifies as a framework program, did not make it compulsory to follow the chapters in the given order while teaching the topics of the Social Studies class and thus provided flexibility to teachers to make the necessary changes. One of the flexibilities provided to teachers was the choice to combine the topics listed in the program in different ways, considering the environmental conditions, and appropriately preparing the chapters for their classes and locations, and to divide the chapters into smaller parts. In this regard, teachers should pay attention to collectively determine the chapters with other teachers, paying attention to the interests as well and current and future needs of students. Another flexibility provided to teachers was the option to teach the chapters divided into two groups as Social Studies and Science and Natural Studies together as one class, after organizing them in accordance with the total dedicated weekly time slots for those classes. The names of chapters to be taught to fourth and fifth graders in the Social Studies classes are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Names of chapters of the social studies class in the 1968 elementary school program

Chapter No	Fourth Grade	Fifth Grade
1	Our Province and Region	Our Country and Neighbors
2	Our Turkey	Ottoman Empire
3	Current Life in Our Country	Overview of the World
4	Islam and Turk's Conversion to Islam	Ottoman Empire
5	Turks' Settlement in Anatolia	Major Countries in the World
6	-	Our Republic

As can be seen in the table above, the Social Studies class was planned to have five chapters in the fourth grade and six chapters in the fifth grade. Chapters of the Social Studies class were determined according to the “from the proximate to the distant” principle for the fourth and fifth graders. This principle is underlined in the 1968 elementary school program. In the program, it is stated that the immediate environment is the most important factor urging individuals to learn while making learning easier and creating the eagerness and power to learn. It is also pointed out that children who examine their environment would better understand and love it, and their mutual relationship and interaction with their environment would help them meet their needs and become more skillful. Therefore, the principle of “immediate environment” was the starting point for all grades.

The program itemized the topics to be covered in each chapter. Some of these topics were formulated as questions. The table below shows the topics covered by the chapters in the program.

Table 3. Topics of chapters of the social studies class in the 1968 elementary school program

Chapter	Fourth Grade	Fifth Grade
1	Our location	a. In which hemisphere is Turkey located? Between which parallel and meridian circles does she exist? b. Which countries and seas surround Turkey? c. The Balkan Peninsula
	Geographical location of our province and region	
	Life in our province and region	
	Management of our province	
	History of our province and region	
	Tourist attractions in our province and region	
2	Importance of tourism for national development	a. Establishment of the Ottoman State b. Istanbul's conquest and establishment of the Ottoman Empire c. Arab countries among our southern neighbors d. Cyprus, Israel, and Iran e. The Soviet Union f. Ottoman Empire's Period of Rise g. Ottoman civilization
	A general view of our country	
	Nature in our country	
	First residents of our country	
3	a. Population of our country	a. The world's movements b. Distribution of the land and seas around the world c. Continents d. Between which continents does the Mediterranean exist? e. Is the Mediterranean, which lies between the east and the west, a closed sea? f. An overview on the American and Ocean Asia continents g. An overview on geographical explorations
	b. Economy of our country	
	c. Administration of our country	
	d. Social works in our country and institutions helping the government	
4	a. Islam and Turks' Conversion to Islam	a. Ottoman Empire's period of stagnation and regression
5	a. The Great Seljuk Empire: The personality of Alparslan and the Battle of Manzikert	a. Turkey's biggest trading partner countries
	b. The Anatolian Seljuk State	b. An overview on other major countries in the world
	c. Turks' characteristics	c. Domestic and international tourism, tourism revenue, our duties in our quest for tourism

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- a. Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the War of Independence
 - b. Our Revolutions
 - c. The Second World War and the United Nations (brief overview)
 - d. Transition to multi-party system and democracy in Turkey
 - e. May 27th and our new constitution (brief overview)
 - f. Elections and the foundation of the Turkish Grand Assembly
 - g. Presidential elections and the duties of the president
 - h. Formation of the government
 - i. Duties of the government and the division of responsibilities among the ministries
 - i. Duties of the citizens to the state
 - j. Selecting a profession
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As can be seen in the table above, all the chapters were planned with an interdisciplinary approach if the contents of the Social Studies class for the fourth and fifth grades are taken into consideration together. However, it is obvious that in addition to developing an interdisciplinary look among the social sciences in every chapter, implications of some of the basic psychological concerns such as “collective education, immediate environment” that form the core of the 1968 elementary school program were present only in the content of some of the chapters taught at the fourth grade. Among the said chapters, the first chapter of the fourth grade aimed at teaching a child about the geography of the region where they lived, making them aware of the kind of administration of their locale as well as the importance of the citizens’ participation in the administration, telling the local history of this locale while also determining the importance of this locale for national development, tourism, and social sciences. Similarly, an association with history was established under the heading formulated through the question “From where did we come to Turkey?” in the second chapter of the fourth grade, which also discussed the geographical characteristics of Turkey.

The content of the Social Studies class program for the fifth grade aimed at not only acquainting students with the geography and history of their immediate environment but also raising awareness about current and recent developments (main events that took place since World War II, mostly events relevant to Turkey, May 27th military coup, and the subject of the constitution). The content included associations with local topics and information about the activities and goals of local social-welfare institutions.

3.4 Teaching of the Social Studies Class in the 1968 Elementary School Program

In the 1968 elementary school program, it was stated that teachers, depending on the need, would be free to use different methods and techniques such as reporting, question and answer, observation, examination, research, laboratory, activity, demonstration, project, experiment, and problem-solving; and the basic principle was that the teacher was supposed to urge students to work individually, in groups, in level-groups, and altogether as a class while teaching the chapters. In this context, teachers were asked to do the following for all the classes:

Teachers should make sure that active participation of students in the teaching and learning activities is achieved. For this purpose, they should include activities conducive to students’ activities such as researching, problem-solving, criticizing themselves and their work, cooperating with others, meeting their own needs on their own, helping others, studying in an organized way, and having the power to improve their behavior.

The tasks that teachers should do were reflected in the Social Studies class, which was accepted as “a consolidated class,” as the basic principles to be considered in the teaching and learning processes of this class. We can find out the general approach of the Social Studies class to education by looking at the said learning and teaching principles. Below is the content analysis table of these principles, which were listed in the “Explanations” section.

Table 4. Approach toward teaching the social studies class in the 1968 elementary school program

Expression Used in the Program	Teaching and Learning Principle	General Teaching Approach
“The topics should be taught not separately as History, Geography, or Citizenship, but as a multidimensional whole consisting of both Historical and Geographical and Civic aspects.”	The principle of wholeness in teaching	
“The teachers should start by making the students examine their immediate environment and go from the proximate to the distant and from the visible to the invisible, thereby gradually expanding views, way of thinking, and horizons of the students.”	The principle of “from proximate to distant” and “from concrete to abstract” in teaching	
“In this class, teachers should avoid providing unnecessary information to students and making students memorize facts, and should furnish students with information that would help them in their daily lives and future.”	Closeness to life in teaching	
“... Special attention should be paid to the personal views of students and these views should be valued.”	Individualism in teaching	Teaching social studies in accordance with the teaching principles
“Teachers should underline the importance of having a profession and having a job that corresponds to the individuals’ abilities...”	Individualism in teaching	
“... Teachers should use the events occurring at and around the school and make students have a close contact with life.”	Associating with life in teaching	
“... Teacher should make sure students examine the objects, tools, castles, mosques, fountains, bridges, houses, libraries, etc. used in the relevant period and the photos of these items...”	Concretization in teaching	
“... Teachers should make sure that students examine the originals, models, or photos and build replicas of such tools of living that take varying forms in different ages, and should advise them in this respect.	Concretization in teaching	
“... Teachers should not deem it enough to just provide information and inspire interest and ideals; they should also empower students to put these emotions and information into practice...”	Providing practice in teaching	
“Teachers should not only employ lecturing or question-answer techniques but also other various methods. Methods that enable students to actively work on their own and urge students to do more research and investigation should be prioritized.”	Active teaching-learning	
“In the Social Studies classes, students learn in not only the classroom but also various places. (school, family, various societies, books, museums, exhibitions, excavations, etc.)”	Learning Outside the School	Social studies education suitable for different teaching methods: techniques and strategies
“Teachers should organize trips and visits while teaching the chapters... Students should be urged to act out appropriate topics.”	Learning Outside the School Drama	
“... Teachers should organize trips between towns and villages...”	Trip	
“Teachers should not simply trust students’ memories while teaching the chapters and should urge students to see better, think better over the things they see, and evaluate those things.”	Active learning	
“... Students should plan their activities together with their friends...”	Cooperation	
“Teachers should not limit the teaching of this class to the course book and should use various resources suitable for students’ level.”	Using various resources	
“... Teachers should utilize animate and inanimate resources and tools that can be obtained as ready-for-use or which students can build ...”	Using resources-tools	
“... Teachers should attract the attention of students to photos, statistics, and charts, which are suitable for students’ level, from among the articles published in newspapers and magazines about the said ceremonies.”	Visuals of newspapers and magazines	Teaching social studies by using various tools, equipment, and materials
“... Teachers should attract the attention of students to these events and use articles, photos, statistics, and charts related to these topics.”	Visuals of newspapers and magazines	
“While focusing on the past, teachers should make sure that students examine the objects, tools, walls, mosques, fountains, bridges, houses, libraries, etc. used in the relevant period, in addition to analyzing their photos and benefitting by using historical paintings and movie theatres...”	Examining a site, using visuals and movie theaters	

As the table shows, the general teaching approach “teaching social studies in accordance with the teaching principles, social studies education suitable for different teaching methods: techniques and strategies and teaching social sciences by using various tools, equipment, and materials” were prominent under the theme of “teaching of the social studies class” according to the 1968 elementary school program.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

During the Republican period, when special attention was paid to the elementary schools that form the first stage of education, the program prepared for elementary schools indicated the efforts to modernize more and switch from a memorization-based of teaching to a practical one understanding. During that period, programs were prepared for elementary schools in 1924, 1926, 1936, and 1948, before 1968, and the draft program for elementary schools was applied in 1962 in addition to the programs for village schools implemented prior to this date. According to this program, topics covered under various disciplines were taught as a Social Studies class in elementary schools in line with the interdisciplinary approach. In the 1968 elementary school program, topics taught in “history, geography, and citizenship” classes were brought together as a single class with an interdisciplinary approach and thus were prepared as a single class for elementary school students. This is an extremely important turning point for the history of Social Studies classes in Turkey.

We determined the placement of the Social Studies class, which began to be taught as a separate class for the first time as part of the 1968 elementary school program, according to its goals, content, and approach to teaching. We considered the content and goals together with the meaning assigned to the concept of social studies as well as to its education. The 1968 elementary school program is the approved version of the 1962 draft program for elementary schools, which was revised after the results of the experimental learning program were obtained for the 1962–1963 academic year. It was approved with decision no. 171 dated July 1, 1968, of the TTK. The most important novelty of the 1968 elementary school program was that the understanding of consolidation, which was provided to first, second, and third graders, was also accepted for fourth and fifth graders to be taught in Social Studies class and Science and Nature Studies class (Gelişli, 2005, pp. 149-150). These two classes were accepted as axis classes under which all the chapters to be covered at fourth and fifth grades were gathered.

According to our findings, the Social Studies class was planned to be taught for 240 minutes at the fourth grade and 200 minutes at the fifth grade under the 1968 elementary school program. The Social Studies class was included in the 1968 program as a class designed with an interdisciplinary understanding, comprising the topics “History, Geography, and Citizenship” because this way, the topics were easier to grasp for the students considering their mental development at the fourth and fifth grades. This interdisciplinary view is obvious in the name of the class; however, the content is more implicit because the disciplines discussed in different chapters can easily be differentiated and most chapters discuss predominantly topics related to history, geography, and citizenship. This implicit Social Studies class was also designed to be an axis class and thus made a core class among the classes taught at the elementary school.

In the 1968 elementary school program, the concept of social studies was defined with a special focus on uniting topics according to their close relations to each other and their suitability for the individual. This will make individuals able to learn with a special focus on their comprehension, as members of society. Another emphasis in this conceptual approach to social studies is on citizenship. Regarding this, the Social Studies class was designed to be a tool for training students in accordance with the national goals and teaching them about the Turkey’s place and role in history. It was planned to be able to relate to social life. The theme of social life emerged with the discussion of the rights and duties of citizens, and the relationship between the rights and duties of citizens was explained by using examples of the sacrifices of the Turkish citizens in history while teachers were also urged to suggest students make the highest possible sacrifices for national duties. This approach is compatible with the “citizenship-centered social studies” approach that aims at reinforcing cultural traditions to support the social actions mentioned by Stanley and Nelson (cited in Ross, 2006, p. 22). According to Stanley and Nelson (cited in Ross, 2006), this approach might emphasize a non-criticizing loyalty, socially accepted behavior, and social reprimand and advancement; however, it is widely accepted that there is a tight connection between topic-centered studies and citizenship qualifications.

According to another finding of this study, the 1968 elementary school program discussed the general goals of the Social Studies class; these goals comprised 28 articles grouped under four main categories. Having run a content analysis on these 28 articles listed in the program, we saw that the goals of the Social Studies class mostly focused on the categories of “*raising an awareness of national unity and consciousness, individual values, social values, mental processes, and acquiring skills and abilities.*” The concepts of “being a good and effective citizen, having an honorable past, characteristics of the Turkish nation, valuing the issues of the nation and country above

everything else, and services of the Turkish nation to civilizations” were prominent in the theme of “raising an awareness of national unity and consciousness.” The concepts of “loyalty to the family, nation, country, Turkish revolutions and ideals, rights, and undertaking duties and responsibilities” were prominent in the theme of “individual values.” The concept of “being able to geographically recognize one’s country, society, environment, and the need to live together” was prominent in the “social values” category. “Air of liberty and awareness of democracy” was also included in this category. The “mental processes” category was overtaken by concepts related to mental processes arranged from simple to complex, and the “acquiring skills and abilities” category was overtaken by various concepts related to personal and social skills and abilities. A citizenship-based approach is noticeable among the goals of the Social Studies class being included in elementary school programs for the first time. Similarly, the study conducted by Akpınar and Kaymakçı (2012) noted that the 1968 elementary Social Studies program mainly focused on citizenship (46.43% of its goals) and the remaining goals were related to geography (21.43% of its goals), citizenship and history (14.29% of its goals), history (10.71% of its goals), and citizenship and history (7.14% of its goals). Karasu Avcı (2016) emphasized that social unity, social harmony and national consciousness is the most important theme in the general goals of 1968 elementary social studies program. However, in addition to the emphasis on these social goals based on citizenship, the Social Studies program focused on individual development; the goals of individual development were also underlined, such as fostering awareness for personal responsibility through the principle of “liberty in everything,” having a profession suitable for one’s abilities, and urging personal development by valuing personal views. Thus, we see that the goals of being a patriotic citizen and an economically productive individual who is also a part of a harmonious society, which were listed in the 1968 elementary school program, all became concrete. Üstel (2014, pp. 251-252) argued that this program “defined the social, personal, and economic dimensions of the type of acceptable citizens to be raised by national education” by way of helping individuals acquire both the social and individual goals. Üstel (2014) also stated that this was crucial for the construction of an understanding of democratic citizenship. Moreover, Doğanay (2016, p. 422) also considered raising democratic and active citizens as one of the main goals of social studies.

The content of the Social Studies class, which was accepted as an axis class in the 1968 elementary school program, was created by combining the topics of history, geography, and citizenship under different chapters. Although the program contained a list of topics forming the content of the class, the flexibility to make changes according to the students’ interests, needs, and location was provided. Implications of the basic pedagogical themes such as “collective education, immediate environment,” which form the core of the 1968 elementary school program, were partially visible in the program especially when the fourth and fifth grades were considered as a whole. However, if every chapter was separately considered, these implications were included only in some of the chapters taught at the fourth grade. In addition, limited space was allotted to being informed about current developments and associating the topics with local issues depending on the location of the school, which is one of the areas that form the backbone of social studies. Although the concept of social studies was used for the first time in the 1968 elementary school program to refer to a class to be taught to 9–10-years-old children (before this change, Society and Country Studies was used instead of the concept of social studies), merging topics related to various disciplines of social sciences and current events with the Social Studies class was one of the main problems of the program. This program still partially exists in the current Social Studies programs. For instance, Ata (2009, pp. 28-29), who pointed out that the issue of merging the topics of core disciplines exists in the course books used in several states in the US, stated that the NCSS proposed the concept of learning field and established connections between the learning field and various disciplines to solve the problem of “handling social reality holistically and merging the core disciplines.” It is within the learning field framework that the interdisciplinary structure manifests itself in the current social studies program in Turkey.

This program emphasized active participation of students in the Social Studies class instead of being passive participants and thus established a connection with a problem-solving approach and urged using *various resources, tools, cinema, and newspaper and magazine visuals* while teaching classes. It is important for students to access different resources through the Social Studies class planned in this program. The most significant way of having students acquire a high level of skills and knowledge in the Social Studies classes is using different resources and pieces of evidence (Alabaş, 2007, p. 2).

To conclude, the discussions about whether the topics covered by social studies, consisting mainly of areas of history, geography, and citizenship in Turkey should be taught as disciplinary or interdisciplinary ended in 1968 when the Social Studies class was included in the elementary school program as a separate class. Thus, the Social Studies class, which was tested with the class that was taught at schools under the name “Society and Country Studies” between 1962 and 1968, turned out to become a class structured around history, geography, and

citizenship, similar to its predecessor. However, it was taught under the name “Social Studies” at the fourth and fifth grades, and because there was a pedagogical concern at the time that these students would be unable to comprehend the classes at these three axes, the mental development of the students was also considered. At the basis of this structure is a Social Studies education centered on topics and citizenship, suitability for the ages of 9–10 years, and collective perception aimed at the cognitive development of these ages, starting out from the concretization. The basic approach to Social Studies education determined with this program focused on practice instead of memorization, also considering the interests and curiosity of students, urging them to acquire information through research instead of making it readily available to them. It also focused on the use of not only the class but also the immediate vicinity as learning environment and using not only the course book but also other primary and secondary sources. In addition, there were some other expectations from the Social Studies class such as valuing individuals’ views in line with the principle of liberty and helping individuals develop an awareness for responsibility in the democratic order and for protecting the understanding of Turkish democracy.

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Note

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