

An assessment on the skills in social studies course curriculum in Turkey

Eray Alaca

Department of Turkish and Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, Giresun University, Giresun, Turkey

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ABSTRACT

The needs of individuals are increasing and diversifying in the rapidly changing world. Individuals cannot continue their lives in society through the only theoretical knowledge, and they also use the skills they have gained. In this regard, the social studies course has an important function in terms of where and how the skills will be used. The fact that the nature of the social studies course is a course in which the theoretical and practical information that prepares students for life are provided, has made it important to teach the skills in the social studies course compared to other courses. In this study, the skills included in the social studies course curriculum in Turkey were examined. In the study, it was observed that the skills were not directly included in the curriculum implemented until 2005. Therefore, the study was limited to the skills included in the social studies course curriculum implemented since 2005. In this study in the case study design, document analysis was applied, and the findings were subjected to descriptive analysis. Thus, it is purposed to reveal the change and transformation by determining the skills added and removed in the social studies course curriculum.

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Corresponding Author:

Eray Alaca

Department of Turkish and Social Sciences Education, Faculty of Education, Giresun University

Giresun, Turkey

Email: e.alaca@giresun.edu.tr

1. INTRODUCTION

The fact that the concept of skill has a wide content has caused its definition to be diverse. In the context of Europe Qualifications Framework (EQF) [1], skills are described as cognitive (involving the use of logical, intuitive and creative thinking), and practical (involving manual dexterity and the use of methods, materials, tools and instruments). The concept of skill is defined by the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) [2] as 'using knowledge' and 'problem solving', which requires logical, intuitive and creative thinking and the ability to use manual dexterity, methods, materials, tools and equipment acquired in a field of study or learning as well as explained by Ehrenberg [3] as designing and executing mental processes. Also, Smith [4] made a definition as capacity gained as a result of experience and studies in order to do a job in the best way. Considering the above and other similar definitions, it has emerged that skills are effective and necessary not only in the education process but also in all areas of life. Especially today, due to the development of technology, the ease of access to information has made it important to use information rather than information, and thus to acquire/gain various skills and competencies [5]–[7]. In this framework, researchers have included skills teaching in the general aims and contents of their education programs by harmonizing skills and lessons in their education systems [8]. Kuloglu and Karabekmez states that want to be more advanced than others have to raise generations with the necessary skills of the 21st century [9]. The 'life & career skills', 'learning & innovation skills - 4Cs (critical thinking, communication, collaboration,

creativity)’ and ‘information, media, & technology skills’, which are called 21st century skills have included in the curricula of the states [10], [11]. Thus, they tried to teach individuals to acquire skills appropriate to the requirements of the age and how to use these skills.

The concept of skill in curricula in Turkey, as in the curricula of other courses, was included as a separate title in the curricula of social studies at a very late period, in the 2005 curriculum [12]–[16]. In the previous curricula, the skills were not included in a concrete order in written form. Since it is not clear under a title which skills the curriculum prioritizes teaching, it has been tried to understand which skill should be mentioned based on the connotations in the learning area, unit and subject headings. This situation has brought with it a subjectivity, causing the students who read and/or implement the curriculum to be limited to their knowledge and interest levels in teaching skills. Despite this, the most important statements regarding skill and skill education are stated in the National Education Basic Law No. 1739, dated 1973, which regulates the Turkish national education system and are defined as: i) To prepare them for life and to enable them to have a profession that will make them happy and contribute to the happiness of the society; ii) To equip every Turkish child with the basic knowledge, skills, behaviors and habits necessary to be a good citizen; iii) To train them in accordance with the understanding of national morality; and iv) To provide those working in various professions with the necessary knowledge and skills for their development in service and in their professions [17]. Thus, the importance of skill and skill training has been emphasized in a law.

The skills that started to be given under a separate title with the social studies course curriculum dated 2005 took place in the form of “skills designed to be acquired, developed and transferred to life in the learning process” [16]. Over time, skills have been developed with various additions and subtractions in accordance with changing conditions and increasing needs. In the social studies course curriculum prepared in 2018, the skills were adapted to the nature of the social studies course with more explanatory and inclusive expressions compared to the previous social studies course curriculum by defining them as: i) To explain the interaction between people and the environment by recognizing the general geographical features of the world they live in and to develop their ability to perceive space; ii) To have critical thinking skills as individuals who know the ways to reach accurate and reliable information; and iv) To be able to use basic communication skills and basic concepts and methods of social sciences in order to regulate social relations and solve the problems they encounter [18]. In this context, in this study, it is aimed to reveal the situation of taking place in social studies course curricula since these are the abilities that need to be acquired, developed and transferred to life in the learning process.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, in which the case study design is implemented and the document analysis method is used, the social studies course curricula of 2005, 2005 (draft edition) 2015, 2017 (draft), 2017 and 2018, which include concrete titles related to skills, were examined. Although the document analysis method used in qualitative studies is considered as reaching a conclusion only through documents, it has been an effective method in revealing the understanding of the period and the change and transformation over time [19], [20]. The obtained findings were converted into tables and subjected to descriptive analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to better understand and interpret the data obtained in this section, the skills included in the social studies course curriculum implemented between 2005 and 2018 are given in tables on a yearly basis. When the results of the study were evaluated, it was seen that there are 40 skills in total in the social studies course curriculum since 2005, but some of them are not permanent. In order for the obtained data to be seen and interpreted better, the skills that have been added and removed from the social studies course curriculum since 2005 are given together in the Table 1.

Table 1. Skills in social studies course curriculum since 2005

Skills	2005	2015	2017 (draft)	2017	2018
Active listening and discussion	-	+	-	-	-
Research	+	+	+	+	+
Using information technologies	+	-	-	-	-
Using information - communication technologies	-	+	-	-	-
Geographical inquiry and location analysis	-	+	-	-	-
Using geographical data	-	+	-	-	-
Conflict management	-	+	-	-	-
Environmental literacy	-	-	-	+	+
Environmental protection sensitivity	-	+	-	-	-
Multiple viewpoints	-	+	-	-	-
Perceiving change and continuity	+	+	+	+	+
Digital literacy	-	-	+	+	+
Economic literacy	-	+	-	-	-
Critical thinking	+	+	+	+	+
Empathy	+	-	+	+	+
Financial literacy	-	-	+	+	+
Entrepreneurship	+	+	+	+	+
Observation	+	+	+	+	+
Using a map	-	+	+	-	-
Map literacy	-	-	-	+	+
Legal literacy	-	-	-	-	+
Communication	+	+	+	+	+
Cooperation	-	+	-	+	+
Recognizing stereotype and prejudice	-	+	+	+	+
Using evidence	-	+	+	+	+
Decision making	+	+	+	+	+
Location analysis	-	+	+	+	+
Media literacy	-	+	+	+	+
Perceiving space	+	+	+	+	+
Self-control	-	-	-	+	+
Political literacy	-	-	-	+	+
Problem solving	+	+	+	+	+
Questioning	-	+	-	-	-
Social participation	+	+	+	+	+
Drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, and diagrams	-	+	+	+	+
Distinguishing historical facts and interpretations	-	+	-	-	-
Correct, proper, and effective use of Turkish	+	-	+	+	+
Creative thinking	+	+	-	-	-
Innovative thinking	-	-	+	+	+
Perceiving time and chronology	+	+	+	+	+
Total	15	29	22	26	27

3.1. Skills in ‘primary education social studies course 4th and 5th grades curriculum’ and ‘primary education social studies course 6th and 7th grades curriculum and guide (draft edition)’ dated 2005

In 2005, the social studies course was reorganized with a constructivist approach. For the first time, the expression ‘skills’ took place concretely in the social studies course curriculum of the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades prepared in this framework. As can be seen in Table 2, skills are given directly under a heading in the 2005 social studies course curriculum. There are 15 skills such as ‘research’, ‘using information technologies’, ‘perceiving change and continuity’, ‘critical thinking’, ‘empathy’, ‘entrepreneurship’, ‘observation’, ‘communication’, ‘decision making’, ‘perceiving space’, ‘problem solving’, ‘social participation’, ‘correct, proper, and effective use of Turkish’, ‘creative thinking’, ‘perceiving time and chronology’ [16], [21], [22].

Table 2. Skills in ‘primary education social studies course 4th and 5th grades curriculum’ and ‘primary education social studies course 6th and 7th grades curriculum and guide (draft edition)’ dated 2005

Skills			
Research	Empathy	Decision making	Correct, proper, and effective use of Turkish
Using information technologies	Entrepreneurship	Perceiving space	Creative thinking
Perceiving change and continuity	Observation	Problem solving	Perceiving time and chronology
Critical thinking	Communication	Social participation	

3.2. Skills in ‘social studies course 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th grades curriculum’ dated 2015

Skills were not included as a separate heading in the social studies course curriculum, which was renewed in 2015 depending on the developments in the field of education. In each learning area, there is a title called ‘skills’ and it is stated which skills will be given in the relevant learning area. As can be seen in Table 3, changes were made in the skills and numbers in the social studies course curriculum dated 2015. In this social studies course curriculum, there are 29 skills including ‘active listening and discussion’, ‘research’, ‘using information-communication technologies’, ‘geographical inquiry and location analysis’, ‘using geographical data’, ‘conflict management’, ‘environmental protection sensitivity’, ‘multiple viewpoints’, ‘perceiving change and continuity’, ‘economic literacy’, ‘critical thinking’, ‘entrepreneurship’, ‘observation’, ‘using a map’, ‘communication’, ‘cooperation’, ‘recognizing stereotype and prejudice’, ‘using evidence’, ‘decision making’, ‘location analysis’, ‘media literacy’, ‘perceiving space’, ‘problem solving’, ‘questioning’, ‘social participation’, ‘drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, and diagrams’, ‘distinguishing historical facts and interpretations’, ‘creative thinking’, and ‘perceiving time and chronology’ [23].

While ‘using information technologies’ in 2005 social studies course curriculum continued to take place as ‘using information and communication technologies’ in 2015 social studies course curriculum, ‘empathy’ and ‘correct, proper, and effective use of Turkish’ skills were excluded from social studies course curriculum. such skills as ‘active listening and discussion’, ‘geographical inquiry and location analysis’, ‘using geographical data’, ‘conflict management’, ‘environmental protection sensitivity’, ‘multiple viewpoints’, ‘economic literacy’, ‘using a map’, ‘cooperation’, ‘recognizing stereotype and prejudice’, ‘using evidence’, ‘location analysis’, ‘media literacy’, ‘questioning’, ‘drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, and diagrams’, and ‘distinguishing historical facts and interpretations’ were added to social studies course curriculum. Since there are 29 skills in the social studies course curriculum dated 2015, social studies course curriculum has the highest number of skills compared to the previous and later social studies course curriculum.

Table 3. Skills in ‘social studies course 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th grades curriculum’ dated 2015

Skills			
Active listening and discussion	Perceiving change and continuity	Recognizing stereotype and prejudice	Social participation
Research	Economic literacy	Using evidence	Drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, and diagrams
Using information-communication technologies	Critical thinking	Decision making	Distinguishing historical facts and interpretations
Geographical inquiry and location analysis	Entrepreneurship	Location analysis	Creative thinking
Using geographical data	Observation	Media literacy	Perceiving time and chronology
Conflict management	Using a map	Perceiving space	
Environmental protection sensitivity	Communication	Problem solving	
Multiple viewpoints	Cooperation	Questioning	

3.3. Skills in ‘social studies course curriculum (primary and secondary school 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th grades) (draft)’ dated 2017

in order to renew and improve the existing social studies course curriculum in 2017, a draft social studies course curriculum was prepared beforehand. In this draft curriculum, the TQF has been included in line with the EQF [2]. There are eight key competencies such as ‘mother language communication’, ‘digital competence’, ‘taking initiative and entrepreneurship’, ‘cultural awareness and expression’, ‘mathematical competence and core competencies in science/technology’, ‘learning to learn’, ‘social and civic competencies’, and ‘communication in foreign languages’ by considering the ‘TQF’ in the skills section of the draft social studies course curriculum. Among these, the skills related to the fields of ‘digital competence’, ‘taking initiative and entrepreneurship’, ‘cultural awareness and expression’, and ‘social and civic competencies’ were associated with the draft social studies course curriculum.

As it can be seen in Table 4, when the content of the skills given in relation to the competencies is examined, it is seen that they are comprehensive and therefore they are evaluated as ‘basic skills’. In the draft social studies course curriculum, a title was opened with the name of ‘skills with direct/indirect relationship’ with the basic skills above, and the skills were given in a table. As can be seen in Table 5, the skills in the previous social studies course curriculum were transformed into ‘skills directly/indirectly related to the basic skills’ in the 2017 draft social studies course curriculum [24]. In this context, in the draft social studies course curriculum dated 2017, 22 skills such as ‘research’, ‘perceiving change and continuity’, ‘digital literacy’,

'critical thinking', 'empathy', 'financial literacy', 'entrepreneurship', 'observation', 'using a map', 'communication', 'recognizing stereotype and prejudice', 'using evidence', 'decision making', 'location analysis', 'media literacy', 'perceiving space', 'problem solving', 'social participation', 'drawing and interpreting tables, graphics, and diagrams', 'correct, proper, and effective use of Turkish', 'innovative thinking', and 'perceiving time and chronology' are included.

Social studies course curriculum dated 2015 was tried to be organized in 2017, and a draft social studies course curriculum was prepared. In this draft social studies course curriculum, the number of skills was reduced to 22. The skills such as 'active listening and discussion', 'using information- communication technologies', 'geographical inquiry and location analysis', 'using geographical data', 'conflict management', 'environmental protection sensitivity', 'multiple viewpoints', 'economic literacy', 'cooperation', 'questioning', 'distinguishing historical facts and interpretations', and 'creative thinking' included in social studies course curriculum dated 2015 were not included in the 2017 draft social studies course curriculum. Instead of these skills, 'digital literacy', 'empathy', 'financial literacy', 'correct, proper, and effective use of Turkish', and 'innovative thinking' skills were included.

Table 4. Key competencies and related skills in 'social studies course curriculum (primary and secondary school 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th grades) (draft)' dated 2017

Key competencies and skills	Explanation
Digital competence	It involves the ability to search, collect and process information, and to use the virtual in a critical and systematic way to define connections and separate the virtual from the real. Individuals should have the skills to access, research and exploit Internet services, as well as the skills to use technological tools to produce, present and understand complex information. Individuals should also have the skills to think critically, [and] to use science and technology to support innovation
Taking initiative and entrepreneurship	Skills relate to the proactive project method (e.g. planning, organizing, directing, leading, representing, analyzing, communicating, presenting, concluding and reporting), impressive presentation and interview, and the ability to work in cooperation, both individually and in teams. In this competency, it is essential that a person gains the ability to reason and identify their strengths and weaknesses and, where necessary, to evaluate and take risks
Cultural awareness and expression	It involves valuing and enjoying the work of art and performance as well as individual expression through the media, using one's innate capacity. These skills also include awareness of social and economic opportunities in cultural activities, expressing one's own innovative side and the perspective of others
Social competencies	Skills include the ability to communicate constructively, tolerance, expressing and understanding different points of view, and empathy. Individuals must be able to cope with stress and disappointments and at the same time separate their personal and professional sides
Civic competencies	Skills are about using public goods effectively and exhibiting cooperation and solidarity in solving problems affecting regional and wider communities. This includes analytical innovative response [approach] and constructive participation in social or near-environment activities that cover the entire field of decision-making, especially from the regional to the national and from there to the world, through voting

Table 5. Skills with direct/indirect relationship with basic skills in 'social studies course curriculum (primary and secondary school 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th grades) (draft)' dated 2017

Skills			
Research	Entrepreneurship	Decision making	Drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, and diagrams
Perceiving change and continuity	Observation	Location analysis	Correct, proper, and effective use of Turkish
Digital literacy	Using a map	Media literacy	Innovative thinking
Critical thinking	Communication	Perceiving space	Perceiving time and chronology
Empathy	Recognizing stereotype and prejudice	Problem solving	
Financial literacy	Using evidence	Social participation	

In the process of preparing the draft social studies course curriculum dated 2017, suggestions were presented, especially through studies in the academic field. In this context, Tay [25], stated that the skills included in the draft social studies course curriculum dated 2017 will overcome the limitations and deficiencies of the social studies course curriculum dated 2005. In addition, Tay [25], suggested that the ability to determine the cause-effect relationship, which is within the scope of the skills to be given directly in the social studies course curriculum dated 2005, should be added to social studies course curriculum.

3.4. Skills in ‘social studies course curriculum (primary and secondary school 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th grades)’ dated 2017

As a result of the discussions and regulations regarding the 2017 draft social studies course curriculum, the 2017 social studies course curriculum was prepared. Key competencies within the scope of TQF, seen in Table 4, were included in this social studies course curriculum in the same way and were also associated with skills. The ‘skills directly/indirectly related to basic skills’ in the draft social studies course curriculum dated 2017 turned into ‘skills intended to be gained within the scope of basic skills’.

As seen in Table 6, the number of skills, which was determined as 22 in the 2017 draft social studies course curriculum, was increased to 26 in the 2017 social studies course curriculum. Among these skills, ‘research’, ‘environmental literacy’, ‘perceiving change and continuity’, ‘digital literacy’, ‘critical thinking’, ‘empathy’, ‘financial literacy’, ‘entrepreneurship’, ‘observation’, ‘map literacy’, ‘communication’, ‘cooperation’, ‘recognizing stereotype and prejudice’, ‘using evidence’, ‘decision making’, ‘location analysis’, ‘media literacy’, ‘perceiving space’, ‘self-control’, ‘political literacy’, ‘problem solving’, ‘social participation’, ‘drawing and interpreting tables, graphics, and diagrams’, ‘correct, proper, and effective use of Turkish’, ‘innovative thinking’, and ‘perceiving time and chronology’ are included [26]. While the skill of ‘using a map’ in the draft social studies course curriculum continued to be named as ‘map literacy’, ‘environmental literacy’, ‘cooperation’, ‘self-control’, and ‘political literacy’ were included as added skills.

Table 6. Skills intended to be gained in the scope of basic skills in the 2017 ‘social studies course curriculum (primary and secondary school 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th grades)’

Skills			
Research	Entrepreneurship	Decision making	Social participation
Environmental literacy	Observation	Location analysis	Drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, and diagrams
Perceiving change and continuity	Map literacy	Media literacy	Correct, proper, and effective use of Turkish
Digital literacy	Communication	Perceiving space	Innovative thinking
Critical thinking	Cooperation	Self-control	Perceiving time and chronology
Empathy	Recognizing stereotype and prejudice	Political literacy	
Financial literacy	Using evidence	Problem solving	

3.5. Skills in ‘social studies course curriculum (primary and secondary school 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th grades)’ dated 2018

In the social studies course curriculum, which was reorganized in 2018, skills were included as ‘skills to be learned’ in line with the TQF in the social studies course curriculum of 2017. As can be seen in Table 7, the 26 skills in Table 6 in the social studies course curriculum dated 2017 above remained the same, and the number of skills was increased to 27 with the addition of only the ‘legal literacy’ skill. Eker [27], who analyzed the social studies course curriculum dated 2005 and the social studies course curriculum dated 2018 comparatively, emphasized the importance of expanding the scope of the qualifications given under the title of TQF in the social studies course curriculum dated 2018, and suggested additions to these competencies such as ‘creative thinking’, ‘questioning competence’ and ‘assimilating national and spiritual values’.

Table 7. Skills to be learned in the ‘social studies course curriculum (primary and secondary school 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th grades)’ dated 2018

Skills			
Research	Entrepreneurship	Using evidence	Problem solving
Environmental literacy	Observation	Decision making	Social participation
Perceiving change and continuity	Map literacy	Location analysis	Drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, and diagrams
Digital literacy	Legal literacy	Media literacy	Correct, proper, and effective use of Turkish
Critical thinking	communication	Perceiving space	Innovative thinking
Empathy	Cooperation	Self-control	Perceiving time and chronology
Financial literacy	Recognizing stereotype and prejudice	Political literacy	

4. CONCLUSION

In this study results were evaluated, it was seen that there are 40 skills in total in the social studies course curriculum since 2005, but some of them are not permanent. In addition to the skills added and

removed in the social studies course curriculum between 2005-2018, 'research', 'perceiving change and continuity', 'critical thinking', 'entrepreneurship', 'observation', 'communication', 'decision making', 'perceiving space', 'problem solving', 'social participation', and 'perceiving time and chronology' skills were included as unchanging skills in each social studies course curriculum. These skills, which are suitable for the nature of social studies, have remained constant as 'main skills'. Other skills could be added or removed in accordance with changing conditions and increasing needs. Some skills continued by changing their names. Among these, the skill of 'using information technologies' in the social studies course curriculum dated 2005 became the skill of 'using information- communication technologies' in the social studies course curriculum dated 2015, and the skill of 'digital literacy' in the draft social studies course curriculum dated 2017. Similarly, the 'economic literacy' skill in the 2015 social studies course curriculum turned into the 'financial literacy' skill in the 2017 draft social studies course curriculum, the skill of 'using a map' in the social studies course curriculum dated 2015 and the draft social studies course curriculum dated 2017 into 'map literacy' skill in the social studies course curriculum dated 2017, the 'creative thinking' skill in the 2005 social studies course curriculum into the 'innovative thinking' skill in the 2017 draft social studies course curriculum, the skill of 'environmental protection sensitivity' in social studies course curriculum dated 2015 into 'environmental literacy' skill in social studies course curriculum dated 2017. The process of gaining the 'literacy' skill, which started with 'economic literacy' and 'media literacy', especially in the social studies course curriculum of 2015, continued with the addition of other 'literacy' skills in the next social studies course curriculum.

When evaluated in general, the social studies course is not only a course that conveys information, but also a course that covers the whole of skills that prepare individuals for life, offer practical information, and teach how to be a human first and then a citizen. With this aspect, a skill training was carried out within the scope of social studies course because skills can be included in social studies course curriculum and in every learning area in accordance with the richness of their content and the purpose of their presentation.

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BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR



Eray Alaca    is an associate professor in Giresun University, Faculty of Education. He received his master and doctorate degree in Gazi University, Institute of Education Sciences. In 2016, he joined the Department of Turkish and Social Sciences in Faculty of Education of Giresun University as assistant professor. He has written several papers in the areas of history, history education and social studies education. He can be contacted at email: e.alaca@giresun.edu.tr.