

The Level of Achievement of Geographical Skills of Social Studies Curriculum in Textbooks

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Abstract


Social Studies is the first course in school where students encounter geographical skills. It is an interdisciplinary course that brings together many social sciences such as history, geography, citizenship, law, economics, psychology, and sociology. In 2005, the Ministry of National Education revised the curricula with a constructivist approach, aiming to provide not only learning outcomes but also various values and skills. In line with the program, the textbooks were also reorganized, and the new textbooks included activities aimed at gaining skills by establishing an outcome-skill relationship. The Social Studies Curriculum, which was updated again in 2018, includes 27 skills. Among these skills, environmental literacy, perception of change and continuity, observation, map literacy, location analysis, perception of space, drawing and interpreting tables, graphs and diagrams, and perception of time and chronology were identified as geographical skills. In this study, the level of access to the above-mentioned geographical skills in 4th-7th grade social studies textbooks was examined through document analysis, one of the qualitative research techniques. As a result of the research, it was concluded that geographical skills are not sufficiently included in the textbooks and that the textbooks focus on filling the content of the acquisition quantitatively rather than skills. From this point of view, it is recommended that a learning outcome-skill relationship should be established in the writing of textbooks and the content of the learning outcomes should be structured in such a way that students gain the relevant skills.

Keywords: Geographical Skills, Social Studies Textbook, Social Studies Curriculum

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A textbook can be defined as a printed teaching material prepared in accordance with the objectives, content, learning process and assessment and evaluation elements of an education program. Although the role of textbooks varies from period to period according to the education system applied in the country and the method used by the teacher in the lesson, they are the first source of accurate information that comes to mind after the teacher in terms of providing students with organized information in the classroom. Textbooks are easy to use, easily accessible to students, used continuously, provide information in a direct and organized manner, and are the most widely used course tool in the learning and teaching process (Artvinli, 2010).

A textbook that is prepared in line with the learning outcomes and to help students and teachers acquire the values and skills foreseen in the program is of great benefit to students and teachers and provides guidance to the teacher. For these reasons, textbooks are the most widely used course material in education and sometimes even the only source. Since textbooks are easy to access, many teachers still consider textbooks as the main source in the education process and teach their lessons accordingly. However, it should be noted that textbooks are not prepared for teachers but for students. Therefore, the activities in the textbooks, which are the most easily accessible resource for students, should be handled in a way to provide geographical skills along with the learning outcomes.

With the use of smart boards in schools, students started to encounter technological tools other than textbooks in the classroom. Through various educational platforms, especially EBA (Education Information Network), lessons have started to be taught through videos and various visuals, and dependence on the textbook has partially decreased. However, despite this, there are still teachers who teach in the classroom by sticking to the textbook, who do not and do not want to go beyond the textbook. Textbooks are for students, not for teachers, so it is not a correct approach for the teacher to use the textbook as the only source during the lesson, not to go beyond the textbook, and to use only the textbook for activities.

Social Studies and Geography

Geography is a discipline that establishes a link between natural sciences and social sciences. For this reason, subjects related to geography are included in Life Science, Science and Technology and Social Studies courses in schools. At the first level of primary education, subjects related to geography start with Life Sciences and continue with Social Studies from the 4th grade to the 7th grade.

With a qualified geography education, natural and human problems occurring in the country and the world can be viewed from a geographical perspective. Geography education can help students acquire problem solving skills. Through travel-observation studies, students can get to know the environment and society better and comprehend social problems better. Geography education is effective in raising individuals who understand and interpret the world. Because it introduces the world to students, addresses the problems in the world, and deals with current events. Thus, it enables students to be sensitive to world problems and to produce solutions (Akinoğlu, 2006).

The ability to recognize the environment in which they live and to maintain a healthy relationship with the environment is important for every individual. The process of acquiring these skills starts in the family and continues at school. "Being a good environmental literate,

creating a good human-environment relationship, and gaining the awareness to prevent harm to people and the environment is only possible through social studies education" (Ceylan, Çoban, 2021).

The reflection of the geography achievements in the social studies curriculum on practice will make great contributions to the solution of environmental problems. However, in our country, both social studies and geography are seen only as courses taught in schools, the importance of social sciences is ignored, and there is more focus on success in science and mathematics courses.

The Social Studies Curriculum was updated in 2018 and the following geographical objectives were included in the special objectives section:

- ❖ To recognize the general geographical features of the world and the environment in which they live, to explain the interaction between human beings and the environment and to develop their ability to perceive space,
- ❖ To realize the limitations of the natural environment and resources, to try to protect natural resources with environmental awareness and to have a sustainable environmental understanding,
- ❖ Show sensitivity to issues concerning their country and the world (MoNE, 2018).

When the learning areas and outcomes of the curriculum are examined, it is seen that the learning area of People, Places and Environments is entirely devoted to geography, and the learning area of Production, Distribution and Consumption and the outcomes related to Global Connections are also related to geography, even if not directly.

Skill means a person's ability to accomplish a task, to finalize a process in accordance with its purpose, as required, depending on predisposition and learning (TLI, 2020). MoNE, on the other hand, defines it as the ability of an individual to perform a task easily and skillfully because of making an intellectual and behavioral effort according to his/her level of readiness in an appropriate learning and teaching environment (MoNE, 2005). In the new program, values and skills are associated with achievements and 27 skills are included in this context.

Table 1

Skills in the Social Studies Curriculum (MoNE, 2018)

1. Research	15. Using evidence
2. Environmental literacy	16. Decision making
3. Perception of change and continuity	17. Location analysis
4. Digital literacy	18. Media literacy
5. Critical thinking	19. Perception of space
6. Empathy	20. Self-control
7. Financial literacy	21. Political literacy
8. Entrepreneurship	22. Problem solving
9. Observation	23. Social participation
10. Map literacy	24. Drawing tables, graphs and diagrams and Comment
11. Low literacy	25. Using Turkish correctly, beautifully, and effectively
12. Communication	26. Innovative thinking
13. Collaboration	27. Perceiving time and chronology
14. Recognizing stereotypes and prejudice	

Therefore, the problem statement of this study was determined as "What is the level of achievement of the geographical skills stipulated by the Social Studies Curriculum in social studies textbooks?". The following sub-problems were created to answer this problem:

- ❖ The social studies (4-7 grade) textbooks taught in our country in the 2020-2021 academic year. What is the level of access to the geographical skills stipulated by the Social Studies Curriculum in the social studies textbooks in the 2020-2021 academic year?
- ❖ What is the effect of the activities in the social studies textbooks at each level on the acquisition of geographical skills?

Methodology

Research Design

This study was conducted with document analysis, one of the qualitative research methods, in accordance with the nature of the subject. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013) defined the document analysis method as the examination of written materials containing information about the events and phenomena to be investigated.

Data Sources

The main documents used in the research (Social Studies textbooks decided to be taught by the MoNE in the 2020-2021 academic year and published in the journal of communiqués are as follows:

Table 2

Main Documents of the Research

Book	Author	Publishing House
4th grade Social Studies textbook	Sami TÜYSÜZ	Tuna Publishing
5th grade Social Studies textbook	Seçil Büket HARUT	Ata Publishing
6th grade Social Studies textbook	Erhan ŞAHİN	Anadol Publishing
7th grade Social Studies textbook	Hikmet AZER	EKO Publishing

Data Collection

In the research, the 4-5-6 and 7th grade social studies textbooks, which were taught as textbooks in schools by the Ministry of National Education in the 2020-2021 academic year, were taken as the data source. In addition to the textbooks, the Social Studies Curriculum was examined. The findings are organized under headings for each grade.

Findings

The Level of Achievement of Geographical Skills Prescribed by the Social Studies Curriculum in Social Studies Textbooks

4th Grade Social Studies Textbook: Geographical Skills and Subject Relationship

In the 4th grade social studies course, a total of 11 objectives related to geography are included. The course hours foreseen to teach these outcomes to students is 38. Table 3 shows the skills within the scope of geography concepts in the learning areas of People-Locations-Environments, Production-Distribution and Consumption, Global Connections in the 4th grade of the Social Studies Curriculum and the subjects related to the relevant skills in the textbook and which geographical skills are included.

Table 3

4th Grade Social Studies Textbooks: Geographical Skills and Subject Relationship

Learning Area	Subjects	Skill Included in the Textbook
People Places Environments	Our Directions Let's Make a Recipe What's Around Us. Weather Where I live Let's Be Ready for Natural Disasters	Perception of space, Using a map, Location analysis, Drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, diagrams
Production Distribution Consumption	Economic Activities in My Family and Environment	-----
Global Connections	Let's Get to Know Countries Our neighbors Turkic Republics Different Cultures The World is Beautiful with Differences	Research

When the 4th grade social studies textbook was examined, it was determined that geography-related skills were included in the learning areas of People-Places-Environments, Production-Distribution and Consumption and Global Connections.

In the book, there are 51 visuals, 22 questions, 8 activities and 1 assessment in the People-Places-Environments learning area; 15 visuals, 4 questions, 2 activities and 1 assessment in the Production-Distribution and Consumption learning area; and 39 visuals, 10 questions, 1 activity and 1 assessment in the Global Connections learning area. The visuals, questions, in-class, and extracurricular activities in the textbook are related to the learning outcomes. However, in terms of geographical skills, it is understood that only the topics in the People, Places and Environments learning area are directly related to geography skills. In the

learning area of Production-Distribution-Consumption, only the topic of Economic Activities in My Family and Environment is related to geography, but geographical skills are not included in the processing of the topic. Although the first 3 topics in the Global Connections learning area are related to geography, it can be said that geographical skills are not included in the skills section and only the research skill is indirectly related to geography. In the content part of the textbook, it can be said that it is quite rich in terms of visuals. Pictures, graphs, maps, tables related to the subjects are of a quality that will attract students' attention. The questions are at a level to develop students' geographical inquiry skills, and the assessment and evaluation questions given at the end of the learning areas include questions of various qualities (gap filling, true-false, matching, test) covering the learning area, but there is no section where students can make their own self-evaluation.

5th Grade Social Studies Textbook: Geographical Skills and Subject Relationship

In the 5th grade social studies course, a total of 12 outcomes related to geography are included. The course hours foreseen for teaching these outcomes and skills to students is 41. The skills within the scope of geography concepts in the 5th grade Culture and Heritage, People-Places-Environments, Production-Distribution and Consumption, Global Connections learning areas of the Social Studies Curriculum and the topics related to the relevant skills in the textbook are given in Table 4.

Table 4

5th Grade Social Studies Textbooks: Geographical Skills and Subject Relationship

Learning Area	Subjects	Skill Included in the Textbook
Culture and Heritage	Beauties of My Country Our Rich Culture Our Culture from Past to Present	Research
People Places Environments	What Do the Maps Say? The Impact of Climate on Our Lives Population and Settlement Why did it happen? Natural Disasters and Their Impacts	Map literacy, Environmental literacy Observation
Production Distribution Consumption	Economic Activities in the Place We Live and the Environment. Professions Around Us Economic Activities and Social Life	Research
Global Connections	Our Contribution to the Economy Journey to Peace A Gift from the Past to the Future: Common Heritage	Research

When the 5th grade social studies textbook is analyzed, it is seen that the 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 7th units contain topics covering geographical skills. While some of these units contain direct geographical outcomes (Unit 3), it can be said that some of them are indirectly related to geography (Units 2, 5 and 7). The topics in the Culture and Heritage learning area are mostly related to human geography and research skills are given indirectly within the scope of geographical skills. All topics and outcomes in the People, Places and Environments learning area are related to geography. Map and environmental literacy and observation skills are given adequately within the topics.,

In this learning area, there are 75 visuals, 7 questions, 10 activities and 1 end-of-unit assessment. The level of achievement of these geographical skills is sufficient. In the Production-Distribution and Consumption learning area, there are 29 visuals, 5 questions, 5 activities and 1 end-of-unit assessment. Even though the topics in this learning area are mostly related to economy, they are associated with human geography. This is also the case in the Global Connections learning area. Although the topics are related to economy, they are also covered in the context of human geography. There are 39 visuals, 7 questions, 6 activities and 1 end-of-unit assessment related to geography in the learning area. Research skill can also be indirectly associated with geography. In the Grade 5 social studies book, we again see that geography achievements are concentrated in the learning area of People, Places and Environments. Here, only map and environmental literacy and observation skills are included among geographical skills, and other geographical skills are not included. Therefore, it can be said that the level of access to geographical skills is not sufficient throughout the book.

6th Grade Social Studies Textbook: Geographical Skills and Subject Relationship

In the 6th grade social studies course, a total of 9 outcomes related to geography are included. The course hours foreseen to teach these outcomes and skills to students are 30. The learning outcomes in the 6th grade Social Studies Curriculum, People-Locations-Environments, Production-Distribution and Consumption, Global Connections learning areas within the scope of geography concepts and the topics related to the related skills in the textbook are given in Table 5.

Table 5

6th Grade Social Studies Textbooks: Geographical Skills and Subject Relationship

Learning Area	Subjects	Skill Included in the Textbook
People Places Environments	Learning Geographical Location Physical Geography Features of Türkiye Human Geography Features of Türkiye Climate and Life on Earth	Perceiving space Map literacy
Production Distribution	Place of Resources in the National Economy	Research

Consumption	Unconscious Use of Resources Investment and Marketing I Pay My Tax Qualified Manpower Choosing My Profession	
Global Connections	Relations with Turkic Republics and Neighboring Countries Economic Relations of Our Country International Roles Assumed by Türkiye	Research

In the 6th grade social studies textbook, geography-related topics are included in the learning areas of People, Places, Environments, Production, Distribution and Consumption and Global Connections. In Unit 3, People, Places and Environments learning area, perception of space and map literacy skills are directly taught. In this learning area, there are 82 visuals, 14 questions, 8 activities and 1 end-of-unit evaluation section, as well as a self-assessment form for students to evaluate themselves.

The topics in the Production, Distribution and Consumption learning area are related to both geography and economics, and the topics are tried to be given in a common way by making use of both disciplines. This is one of the examples that social studies course is taught with an interdisciplinary approach. Although the concepts covered in the unit are related to human geography topics, there is no direct geographical skill. The research skill can be indirectly associated with geography. In the learning area, there are 75 visuals related to geography, 11 questions and 4 activities, 1 end-of-unit assessment and a student self-assessment form. In the Global Connections learning area, although the topics covered in the book are related to geography (geography of countries), the topics are again related to economy and therefore no direct geographical skill is given. There are 31 visuals, 6 questions, 3 activities and end-of-unit evaluation questions on topics considered to be related to geography. As in other 4th and 5th grade social studies textbooks, it was determined that geographical skills were concentrated in Unit 3 in the 6th grade textbook.

In other learning areas, even though the subjects are related to geography, no direct geographical skills are included.

7th Grade Social Studies Textbook: Geographical Skills and Subject Relationship

In the 7th grade social studies course, the total number of objectives related to geography is 7 and the course hours allocated for these objectives is 23. The skills within the scope of geography concepts in the 7th grade Social Studies Curriculum, People-Locations-Environments, Production-Distribution and Consumption, Global Connections learning areas and the topics related to the relevant skills in the textbook are given in Table 6.

Table 6

7th Grade Social Studies Textbooks: Geographical Skills and Subject Relationship

Learning Area	Subjects	Skill Included in the Textbook
People Places Enviroments	Life on Earth Population Causes and Consequences of Migration	Drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, diagrams
Production Distribution Consumption	Mother Earth Means of Production from Past to Present	Perceiving change and continuity Perceiving time and chronology
Global Connections	Peace at Home Peace in the World We Are In	-----

When the textbook is analyzed, it is seen that the subjects related to geographical skills are concentrated in the learning area of People, Places and Environments. Although human geography topics are mostly included in this area, it was determined that tables and graphs were given as well as visuals, 33 visuals, 14 activities, 23 questions, 1 end-of-unit evaluation and student self-evaluation form were included. It is understood that the skill of drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, diagrams is given directly, and this skill is tried to be gained with the tables and graphs in the book.

The topics are given in relation to history and economy as well as geography. As a geographical skill, the ability to draw and interpret tables, graphs, diagrams are given, but the topics are given in relation to geography, history and economy. There are 9 visuals, 7 activities, 11 questions and end-of-unit evaluation questions in the learning area. Although the topics in the Global Connections learning area include concepts related to geography, there are also concepts related to economy and law, and there is no direct geographical skill. Topics related to geography were supported with 16 visuals, 5 activities, 11 questions and end-of-unit evaluation questions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, the level of access to geographical skills in middle school social studies textbooks was examined and it was concluded that the level of access to geographical skills given in the program was not sufficient in the textbooks. When the Social Studies Curriculum is examined before the textbook, 27 skill areas are given in the curriculum and 8 of these 27 skills directly belong to geography. These are environmental literacy, perception of change and continuity, observation, map literacy, location analysis, perception of space, drawing and interpreting tables, graphs and diagrams, and perception of time and chronology. First, it can be said that the geographical skills belonging to the objectives in the curriculum are not sufficiently included in the curriculum, and more emphasis is placed on map literacy, preparing, and interpreting tables, graphs, charts and diagrams, and the reflections of this are seen in the textbooks.

Skills such as observation, perception of space, location analysis, perception of change and continuity are not given enough space, and some of these skills are not directly related to geography but are associated with fields such as history, economics, and law. When the textbooks are examined, it is seen that the skills related to geography from 4th to 7th grade are given directly in the learning area of People, Places and Environments, while the subjects and skills in the learning areas of Production-Distribution and Consumption and Global Connections are not directly related to geography.

The activities and visuals used in the textbooks generally include activities at lower taxonomic levels to fill the content of the learning outcomes rather than providing students with direct geographical skills. This is because student-oriented activities such as questions, fill in the blanks with visuals, matching questions in the textbooks are taxonomically at the basic level of the cognitive domain and are not in a structure that will help students gain skills. To gain skills, activities should be designed in a way that puts students at the center and makes them practice, take them out of the classroom, if necessary, make them observe, and enable them to learn by doing and experiencing. Again, it can be said that there are almost no project or performance assignments in the textbooks to help students gain geographical skills. Project and performance assignments are left to the initiative of teachers rather than textbooks. In addition, it is very difficult to gain geographical skills only through activities based on the book, and these activities have a structure in which the teacher "covers the subject" to fill in the acquisitions rather than skills.

- ❖ In-service training can be provided to teachers on gaining skills and designing appropriate activities, and teachers can be provided to improve themselves in this area.
- ❖ Textbooks alone are not enough to gain geographical skills. Geographical skills are not skills that can only be acquired by doing the activities, fill in the blanks and tests in the book. To gain geographical skills, social studies textbooks should include activities (such as excursions, observations, etc.) in which students can be more physically active and which they can do inside and outside the classroom.
- ❖ Only a few skills are emphasized in the textbooks, for example, activities related to location analysis and space perception skills are not included. For this reason, it is recommended that all the geographical skills given in the program should be included in the textbooks and distributed in a balanced manner.

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