



WHAT HAS CHANGED IN THE WORLD REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY TEACHING IN TURKEY: A SYLLABUS-BASED ASSESSMENT

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Abstract:

During the Republican period in Turkey, various arrangements were made regarding the world regional geography syllabi. In this context, with the curriculum of 2005, which forms the overall structure of the geography curriculum in today's secondary education, the understanding of world regional geography has greatly changed. This study is descriptive as well as qualitative data model and document analysis in terms of data gathering techniques. The main objective of the study is to explain the historical development process of countries' geography teaching in the secondary education in Turkey and to set forth the current state of the countries' geography teaching. The study revealed that the current teaching of countries' geography in secondary education has been renewed. In this context, it is revealed that the manner with which the topics related to countries' geography were delivered was aiming to analyse the geographic information, and to achieve progress in an innovative sense.

Keywords: geography education, world regional geography, Turkey, syllabus

1. Introduction

In the committee decisions of the 1st Turkish Geography Congress (1941) which is the most important meeting where geographic matters were discussed and resolved at a state level during the Republican era, it was decided, among other geography classes in the secondary schools, to allocate 2-hour class for Geography of States for 7th grades students. According to this curriculum, in the first year of the high school, the students were to be taught general geography, in the second-year world regional geography, and in the third and last year the geography of Turkey. However, in the following years, there were discussions about the topics to be taught in the curriculum. In the secondary education geography curriculum, which started to be implemented in the 1987-1988 academic year, two-hour world regional geography class per week was allocated for the 7th-grade students as well as for the 10th-grade students (Doğanay, 1989).

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Sometimes, the geography of countries in secondary education in Turkey was included as a standalone class into the curriculum, and sometimes as a part of a geography textbook. Regardless of the manner in which it was given, information about Turkey and various countries of the world have always been provided during primary and secondary education (Demirkaya, 2004). Thus, the students were given an opportunity to know their own countries as well as various countries and to form a correct opinion about them and to make a comparison between the countries (Geçit, 2008). However, not all countries of the world were included individually in the geography curriculum of the early years of the Republic or of today's. For example, the content of countries' geography class taught in high schools between 1924 and 1942 did not include the topic of geography of Turkic world (Topal, 2016). Neither the countries that have minimal political and/or economic strength were included in the curricula of the class. That's partly because some countries in the world have little characteristics important enough to be taught to students or to be included in the curricula as required by the principle of usefulness.

The availability of published books on world regional geography is another important issue. It is clear that there are not many books published on world regional geography in Turkey. In an academic sense, the number of publications on "how to include the world regional geography in the curriculum, and how much space it should take" is very low. However, it can be seen that, starting from the late periods of Ottoman State, some works have been published on the subject of "how to teach the geography classes" Among those written during the Ottoman era are How to Teach Geography by Satı Bey (1322), Faik Sabri's Geography Education in Schools (Duran, 1331), and Halil Fikret Kanad's Teaching Method of Geography (Kanad, 1927). These works explain how to teach geography while emphasizing the need to avoid rote learning, particularly regarding the geography of countries, and how to teach country-specific information.

The focus on the world regional geography still continued after the Republic. However, some specific problems showed themselves at secondary education levels in Turkey, and even higher education faced some existed problems. In the foreword of the Central and South American Countries Geography book he published, Güney (1993) who has various books on the world regional geography pointed out: "*Unfortunately, in our country, the works that cover the characteristics of the continents and countries, which are addressed by regional geography methods at higher education level, are almost non-existent.*" From this point of view, the present study will fill an important gap and shed new light on future studies.

2. Material and Methods

2.1. The Model of the Study

This study is mainly a qualitative data gathering model and a document review. The study has a descriptive nature and uses a document reviewing technique in terms of data gathering techniques. Qualitative data measures the behaviours that cannot be calculated

through arithmetical relations (Singh, 2007). As for document review; books, newspapers, reports, magazines, etc. are scanned (Baş & Akturan, 2017). Among the documents that can be important for educational research are educational files and records such as curricula, etc. (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). With the document technique, any kind of private or formal document can be reviewed (Sonmez & Alacapinar, 2016). In this study, too, required analyses were performed after the collection of the data by scanning the literature, and assessments thereof have been made. The scanning method is to review the published works in a systematic way and analyse them by taking notes and classifying them (Küçük, 2016).

2.2. Data Collection & Data Analysis

During the preliminary phase of the study, various articles, documents, books, and magazines were reviewed to collect data. During the data-gathering stage, the geography curricula prepared in Turkey have been analysed, the decisions on geography taken in the congresses have been reviewed, and academical publications on the matter have been scanned for the benefit of the study. In this context, we were able to reach some books related only to countries' geography that were published at secondary schools, and their content, the way they handle the topics, and their physical appearances were reviewed. Also reviewed were the publications intended for higher education on the topic of world regional geography, and their adequacy in Turkey is investigated. The findings obtained were included in the study. However, the focus of this study is the geography class at the high school level in 2018. Therefore, the curriculum of world regional geography taught in the high schools based on the textbooks recommended by the Ministry of Education for 2018-2019 academic year took a significant place in this study.

2.3. The Focal Point of the Study

The focal point of this study is to find answers to the following questions: "In the past and present, how much space was allocated in the geography curricula and textbooks for the world regional geography, and in what manner they were addressed?" "How has the education of world regional geography changed over the years?"

2.4. Validity and Reliability of the Study

Reliability in scientific research demonstrates the ability to access sufficient relevant material, and the representative quality of the documents in the research field (McCulloch, 2004). In qualitative research, document review and document validation are of great importance (Patton, 2002). In qualitative research, reliability can be regarded as a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). While conducting this study, the documents were reviewed in both terms; if they are academically qualified and if they contain accurate information. In addition, it is ensured that the data represents the field. Also, in relation to world regional geography, reliability of the study is improved by referring to the insights of some teachers who are still working as

geography teachers at state schools governed by Ministry of Education. In this regard, opinions of four scholars who serves at various higher education institutes were used in the study. Therefore, using different data to support each other in this study increased both reliability and validity quality.

3. Findings

The review of the history of Turkish education revealed that resources on curriculum-making and curricula do not go back too much. Madrasahs as educational premises have gained their institutional structure as late as the Seljuk period (Özkan, 2018). Although many significant works on geography have been produced during the Ottoman period, a systematic geographic education for the public has only taken place when Sultan Mahmut II has made the primary education mandatory in 1824. The issue was handled comprehensively and organized in three stages, namely Sıbyan (primary), Rüştiye (secondary) and Mekâtib-i âliye (higher education), while the geography also found its place with the arrangement in 1938 (Akyıldız, 2003). In this regard, a Regulation of Public Education was issued in 1891 and a list of the classes to be taught at Sıbyan (primary) schools has been developed. In compliance with the sixth article of this regulation, the short geography class was among the classes in the curriculum of these schools. In 1902, there were some changes made to the curriculum, but these changes did not change the location of the geography classes. Geography class regained its position in the curriculum as two-hour class a week in the first, second, and third years. The first year syllabus consisted of topics of general geography while second and third years' syllabi consisted of topics related to world regional geography. The topics of world regional geography class taught in the sophomore year were as follows:

Four Continents: Asia, Africa, Americas, and Australia. Except for Europe, all continents were to be taught in detail. These are:

- a) The location of Asia continent, its boundaries, population and demography, and its natural conditions. These topics were to be addressed in detail. Siberia and Turkistan, Iran, Caucasus, Minor Asia Peninsula, Baluchistan, Afghanistan, East India Peninsula, East and West Indies, China, and Japan.
- b) General information about Africa: South and Central Africa, East Africa, West Africa, Sudan, Sahara, Nile Basin, Egypt, Sudan, Abyssinia (Ethiopia), Principality of Tunisia, Tripoli, Algeria, Morocco, and African Islands.
- c) General information about Americas: Natural and political conditions of South America. Central America; natural and political conditions North America; natural conditions. Mexico, United States of America, British Colonies in Canada, Greenland, Alaska (American soils in the north pole).
- d) General information about Australia: New Holland and Tasmania, Polynesia, Micronesia, South Pole, North Pole.

The courses given in the third year (senior year) can be grouped under two headings: 1- Continents and Countries, 2- Geography of Ottoman. Of these, continents and countries consisted of the following topics:

- a) Europe and Ottoman Regions; These topics will be taught in detail. Europe; its location, boundaries, coverage, coasts, natural conditions, weather and water conditions, mineral resources, fauna, agricultural products, human races, faiths, and governments.
- b) South Europe: Balkans, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Italy, Swiss, Italian Islands, Iberia, Spain, Portugal, Central Europe, Romania, Austria, and Hungary.
- c) West Europe: France, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, England, Baltic Sea, Nordic Sea.
- d) North Europe: Scandinavia.
- e) East Europe: Russia.

In the curriculum of Geography of Ottoman class taught in the third (senior) year were the following topics:

- a) Geography of Ottoman Lands: The location, natural and political borders of the Ottoman Empire on three continents will be treated as an inseparable common continent. The coverage, population, faiths, and government of Ottoman State.
- b) Ottoman Europe: Locations, borders, coverages, water and weather conditions, mountains, rivers, mineral wealth, fauna, flora. This topic will contain the description of the Administration. Provinces, districts, and renowned cities will be taught.
- c) Ottoman Asia: Administrative and natural conditions.
- d) Ottoman Africa: Administrative and natural conditions.
- e) Commercial and political significance of the Ottoman Empire. Highways and marine lines: Highways, railways, convenient roads, marine imports, mail and telegram services. Relations with the continents and countries, natural and commercial relations, transportation (Akpınar, 2010).

Various textbooks intended for these topics were issued during the late periods of Ottoman Empire. Among them was the work by Ali Tevfik. The work of Ali Tevfik issued in 1897, the Geography of Ottoman Countries (Memâlik-i Osmaniye Coğrafyası) was intended for the 3rd year (senior year) students of Imperial School of Administration (current Faculty of Political Science, Ankara University (a.k.a. Mektebi-i mülkiye-i şahane), and of Public High School (Mekteb-i İdadiye-i Mülki). This work provides geographical information on various regions and provinces of the Ottoman State (Tevfik, 1897). On the other hand, there are many geography books written on the geography of the Ottoman State in the late 1800s and early 1900s. However, these books are not intended for educational activities.

Efforts for issuing geographical curriculum, syllabus, and textbooks has continued after the proclamation of Republic in Turkey. The geographical curriculum has been rewritten and/or amended many times since the proclamation of the republic in Turkey. The dates in which curricula and syllabus were made; 1924, 1942, 1957, 1971, 1972, 1983,

1992, 2005, 2011, and 2018 (Aydın & Güngördü, 2015). However, there have been occasional changes made to lean programs, albeit on a small scale. It would be useful to investigate some of these programs. In this context, let's review the curricula of 1924, 1942, 1957, 2011, and 2018.

The name of the class taught in the sophomore year of high schools in 1924 was the Geography of Big and Neighbouring Countries. Particularly included in this curriculum were the countries that have worldwide influence and are neighbours of Turkey. These countries have been listed in the curriculum in the following order: Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia, Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Soviet Union, Italy, Germany, France (including Colonies and Mandates), England (including Colonies and Mandates), Belgium and Dutch (including Colonies), Iran, Japan, the United States of America, Brazil, and Argentina. The curriculum had emphasized that cultural, economic, and political relations of these countries with Turkey should form the pivot point of the teaching. Also, the following aspect should be addressed while describing the governments: geographical status, borders, distance, topography, climate, waterways, fauna, populations, government and cities, natural resources, economic life and transportation means, commerce, and colonies.

Generally speaking, the program prepared in 1924 did not include the geography of countries for the first and third grades of high school. It is worth to note that the content of the syllabus of the Big and Neighbouring Countries taught as a two-hour class at the sophomore year of the high schools has specifically outlined how to teach the topic, the system in which the country's characteristics would be provided, and what information would be given to the students. It is seen that the education program contained 17 countries in total, of which the European countries were given particular importance while containing three countries from Asia (Iran, Japan, and Soviet Union) and three countries from the Americas (USA, Brazil, and Argentina). There are no African countries in this program which includes the mandates and colonies of France and England. The program also excluded other Turkic countries other than Turkey (Geçit, 2008).

In 1942, various studies were conducted on the curriculum of geography and decisions were made about the Geography of States course. For example, in the *Tebliğler Journal* (Commoniques Journal) issue no.189, it is stated that the textbook of Behçet Gücer was accepted for the course of State Geography for the sophomore year of high schools, and it was decided to use the books published in Turkish terms under the curriculum of the previous academic year for the Asian and African continents class taught in the second grades of junior high schools. In the *Tebliğler Journal* No.197, the curriculum of the course Geography of the Countries taught in the second grades was specified as follows:

A. Introduction: Political and Economic States of The World

B. Countries: 1-Bulgaria, 2-Greece, 3-Syria, 4-Iraq, 5-Iran, 6-Soviet Union, 7-Germany, 8-Italy, 9-England, 10-France, 11-United States, 12-Japan.

In addition, there was a "remark" made in relation to the curriculum, instructing: "The subject, Colonies, shall not be given in detail, and only general information shall be given regarding the Colonies (Tebliğler Dergisi, 1942).

In the geography curriculum of 1957, a two-hour class per week was added to the course loads for the sophomore students of Science and Literary Branches of the high school. The content of the curriculum is as follows:

Introduction: Politic state of the world: Countries that were built after World War I. & II.
I. Neighbouring Countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Syria and Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Iraq, Iran, and Soviet Union.

II. Danube Countries: Romania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austria.

III. Central European Countries: Germany, Poland, Switzerland.

IV. West European Countries: France, England, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

V. North European Countries

VI. Mediterranean Countries: Italy, Iberian Peninsula, North Africa, Egypt, Libya.

VII. North America: United States of America and Canada

VIII- South America: Brazil, and Argentina

IX. Asian Countries: Pakistan, India, Central Asia, China and Japan.

X. The Impacts of various countries on the world's economy

An explanatory note was also included in the 1957 program, where it stated that the geography of the states in the program was to be examined in general, but a duly emphasize should be placed on those who had more political, economic and cultural relations with our country (Tebliğler Dergisi, 1957).

As can be seen, the Geography of the States of 1942 had a name change as Geography of the Countries in 1957 and was adopted again with some additions and revisions. A review of later curricula of geography shows the trend has continued. However, with the radical structuring in 2005, the approach to include the geography of countries under a single course in the geography program was abandoned.

The principles of Turkish National Education were set forth in accordance with the National Education Basic Law No. 1739, published in 1973. Here, it is stated the intent of the curriculum of geography class is to provide the students with skills to recognize the spatial values belong to their country and the world starting from the near surroundings, and to develop the awareness to protect such values based on the basic principles of Turkish National Education. Another goal of the curriculum is to provide information on developed or developing countries, particularly, the regions and countries that have close relations with Turkey. Therefore, it is necessary to teach the knowledge of the countries as part of the geography classes, and for them to be a part of the basic subjects of national education.

The Geography of Countries class has also been taught during the "Class Passing and Credit System" period which started in 1991-1992 academic year and gradually replaced by the "pass a course and credit system" starting from 1995-1996 academic year. As a matter of fact, the Geography Curriculum of the Secondary Education Institutions was accepted by the National Education and Training Board, Ministry of Education and

published in the Tebliğler Journal dated 27 April (1992b), issue no.2357, decision no. 79. We can summarize the items stated in the objective section and related to the geography of countries intended for the students as follows:

- a) Getting to know our country and the world starting from our close surroundings
- b) To indicate how well the welfare and happiness of nations depends on the degree of benefiting from the geographical environment, and the extent to which the natural resources of our country, which have not been processed yet, constitute a large working area.
- c) To introduce neighbouring and distant countries through their aspects that concern our country, and to gain information about them by comparing them with each other.
- d) To make the students understand and acknowledge that nations are in need of each other and have to cooperate with each other; that common problems can be resolved with mutual goodwill and efforts.
- e) To make the students comprehend the position and importance of Turkey in the World's economy by having them review the economic ties between our country and the World's countries.

Regarding the geography of the world regional geography in the explanations of the Tebliğler Journal issue no 2357;

1. General geography and world regional geography are two complementary research and study branches of the same discipline. General geography; examines how geographical events occur on the earth and their comparisons with their counterparts in different parts of the earth, in other words, their relations with the earth on the basis of geographical events. In contrast, the geography of the countries; examines the effects of various geographical events on some part or all of the earth, and the consequences of them. It investigates whether there are different regions in that part or on the whole earth, and reveals their geographical characteristics. Therefore, geography is a whole and a single discipline.

2. Regions and countries on the continents will be described geographically in general sense. The curriculum will have brief and concise information on the human and economic geographies of the countries in the program and they will be compared with Turkey in terms of their economic activities. Sufficient emphasis will be placed on countries that have historical, cultural, economic, and political relations with our country. In addition, locations with Turkic population will be specified.

3. Also, during the discussion of the topics fall under the geography of countries, the principle of Atatürk, 'Peace at home, peace in the world', should be explained in relation to the institutions that were built after World War II to protect the peace and safety of the world.

The world regional geography program course content of the 2357 issue of Tebliğler Journal is also explained. The programs of the second year of high school consist of two parts: The first part consists of Turkey's regions, while the second part consists of the countries. Accordingly, the program is as follows:

A. While examining the geographical regions, after specifying the geographical location of the region, the natural conditions will be mentioned to the extent of their effects on human and economic life.

B. Geographical locations of the countries in the curriculum will be specified, and brief and concise information on the human and economic geographies thereof will be provided, and they will be compared with Turkey in terms of their economic activities. Sufficient emphasis will be placed on countries that have historical, cultural, economic, and political relations with our country. In addition, locations with Turkic population will be specified.

I. Unit: Major Countries of Middle East; Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Cyprus (and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus), Libya,

II. Unit: Soviet Union.

III. Unit: Major Countries of Africa: Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, Nigeria.

IV. Unit: Major Countries of Asia: 1. South Asia: Pakistan, India.

2. South East Asia: Indonesia.

3. Far East: China, Japan, and South Korea.

The first part of the third grade (senior year) of high school programs consists of topics related to the economic geography of Turkey, while the second part consists of topics related to the countries. Accordingly, during the review of the countries under the curriculum of the third grades (senior year) consideration should be given to the following issues:

I. Unit: Major Countries of Europe: Italy, Germany, Switzerland, France, England, Netherlands, Sweden.

II. Unit: Lands of the New World; 1- North America: United States of America. 2- South America: Brazil. 3- Australia

III. Unit: International Organizations and Turkey; United Nations, NATO, OECD, European Union, European Community.

After the decision in April 1992, various decisions regarding the geography of the countries were taken in the same year. Thus, the class, geography of countries, was started to be given under a curriculum of its own. Indeed, the Geography of the Countries program was accepted to be implemented starting from 1992-1993 academic year under the Passing and Credit System of Secondary Education Institutions based on the Tebliğler Journal of 2366 of the Ministry of National Education dated September 28 (1992a). In addition, other regulations have been made regarding the world countries geography in the subsequent issues of the Tebliğler Journal No 2366. While this program and topics of Human and Economic Geography of Turkey program are combined in a separate curriculum, the topics of countries were combined in another curriculum. Accordingly, the topics of countries' geography are as follows;

I. Unit: Turkey's neighbouring countries; Caucasian countries (Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia), Iran, Iraq, Syria, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

II. Unit: Major Middle East Countries; Afghanistan, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Libya

III. Unit: Balkan countries; Macedonia, Yugoslavia (Serbia, Montenegro) Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Albania

IV. Unit: Major European Countries; a) Southern Europe; Italy, Spain, and Portugal. b) Central Europe; Germany, Switzerland, Hungary, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. c) Northern Europe; Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland. d) Western Europe; France, the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, e) Eastern Europe; Romania, Moldavia

V. Unit: Major African Countries; Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Republic of South Africa, Nigeria.

VI. Unit: Major Countries of America; a) North American Countries; United States (USA), Canada, Mexico. b) South American Countries; Brazil, Argentina.

VII. Unit: Major Countries of Asia; a) Central Asian Republics; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan. b) South Asian Countries; Pakistan, India, Bangladesh. c) Southeast Asian Countries; Malaysia, Indonesia. d) East Asian Countries; People's Republic of China, Japan, South Korea.

VIII. Unit: Oceania; Australia.

IX. Unit: International Organizations and Turkey; United Nations, NATO, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Council of Europe, European Community (EC)

2005 was an important milestone in the process of restructuring the curricula and textbooks and also affected subsequent programs. The curriculum of 2005 was reorganized in 2011, keeping the basic structure the same but with some changes and innovations. In the Geography Class Curriculum, which was launched in 2011, topics related to countries were included in the learning area "Global Environment: Regions and Countries" (MEB, 2011). In the 2018 curriculum which was prepared on the same basis, the learning area "global environment: regions and countries" remained unchanged. The characteristics of the issues related to the countries in both 2011 and 2018 curricula are generally based on the analysis of various regions, cultural features, and different development levels of the countries together with their causes (Gökçe, 2015). In addition, it is observed that the general understanding of this curriculum aimed to raise the awareness of the students on human-environment relations witnessed in different fields of the world and to enable them to gain the ability to evaluate the natural and human resources of countries.

In addition to benefiting from the geography curricula of various countries, the impacts of the academic studies in Turkey and the information obtained from the individuals who deal with education, too, have a significant share in the preparation of the geography curriculum of 2018. The geography curriculum implemented in all schools in Turkey in the 2018-2019 academic year is based on providing an education that coincides with scientific, social, and technological developments. In this regard, the textbooks are constantly updated based on emerging situations as local, national and global events are spreading all over the world rapidly. This situation is mostly reflected

in the geography of the countries. Because, the consequences of changes occurred in the economic characteristics, population structures, administrative and even political boundaries of the countries and their reconstruction need to be reflected in geography textbooks quickly and accurately.

In the preparation of the geography curriculum for 2018, units and achievements were determined for each grade level, and their duration and rates were included. The titles of the four units to be taught from the ninth grade to the twelfth grade are as follows: 1-Natural Systems; 2-Human Systems; 3-Global Environment: Regions, Countries 4-Environment and Society

While the “world countries geography” course was implemented as a single curriculum in the previous years and a textbook called world countries geography was used for teaching purposes, this practice was abandoned in 2005. Within the geography class in the geography curriculum of 2018, the unit titled Global Environment, Countries is particularly intended for the introduction of the countries. However, there is no separate world countries geography class among the geography classes taught in the 2018-2019 academic year. Consequently, information about countries is interspersed among every geography curriculum from ninth grade to twelfth grade.

The number of the learning outcomes, course hours and rates (%) for the chapter Global Environment: Regions, Countries varies depending on the level of education. Relevant data are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Learning Outcomes, Course Hours and Rates of the Unit Global Environment: Regions and Countries Based on the 2018 Syllabus

Unit Global Environment: Regions and Countries			
Class Level	Number of the Learning Outcomes	Duration/Course Hours	Rate (%)
9th Grade (2 hours)	3	5	7
10th Grade (2 hours)	1	4	6
11th Grade	7	17	24
11th Grade (4 hours)	9	40	28
12th Grade (2 hours)	9	31	43
12th Grade (4 hours)	11	38	27

Source: MEB, Syllabus of Geography, 2018

In the ninth-grade geography curriculum, the concept of the region was included in the global environment unit and it was stated that the topics related to the countries in the regions identified according to various criteria should be included. In the tenth grade, demographics of the world and Turkey were discussed within the "human systems" chapter, and negative and positive impacts of the population growth being fast or slow are requested to be taught and explained by providing various examples. The unit titled 'global environment: regions and countries' of the tenth-grade curriculum is aimed to teach international transportation lines on a regional and global scale. It is demanded in the 10th-grade curriculum that the unit 'Environment and society' should describe the characteristics of the natural disasters and their distribution on the world as well as the

practises of various countries against natural disasters. The chapter 'Human Systems' of the 11th-grade curriculum included the demographic policies implemented by the countries during different periods and the consequences thereof, and it is stated that the current policies of various countries on demographics should be compared. Again, in this chapter is the explanation about the 'relation between the natural resources and economy' and an assessment on the agricultural sufficiency of Turkey and various countries is requested to be performed. The chapter 'Global Environment: Regions and Countries' of 11th-grade curriculum involves the first culture centres of the world; propagation of various cultural regions on the world; propagation areas of the Turkish culture, and the reasons for Turkey being the centre of civilizations throughout the history. Thus, the students were provided with the opportunity to learn the characteristics of these regions and countries, albeit indirectly. In addition, this chapter includes; international commerce as well as inter-regional trade; areas of raw materials, production, and markets; the role of the tourism activities in the international interaction; industrialization process of an industrial country; the relation between the agriculture and industry in the countries at different levels of development; regional and global organization; and thus it facilitates discussing the countries from different perspectives, thus ensures the permanent learning of the topic.

In this context, it should be noted that giving room to the propagation of various cultural fields (Islamic, Chinese, Indian, Western, Oriental, Slav-Russian, and African cultural regions), and demanding for the topic to be evaluated in spatial and cultural contexts allow the geographical information on many countries to be learned in indirect way. Other issues that can be evaluated within this framework are as follows; establishing relationships between international and inter-regional trade and raw material, production and market areas; explaining the role of tourism activities in the interaction between countries; analysing the agriculture-economy relationship of countries with different levels of development; evaluation of regional and global organizations (EU, CIS, UN, D-8, G-20, IIT, KEIK, NATO, OECD, OPEC) in terms of their influence range. The unit 'Global Environment: regions and countries' of the 12th-grade curriculum includes the following topics: regional and global impacts of the location of the countries; the role of the technological developments in the international cultural and economic interactions; historical and cultural interaction between our country and Turkistan, the Caucasus, the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa; the factors affecting the development level of the countries; the social and economic characteristics of developed and developing countries; effects of the potential natural resources on the regional and global relationships of the countries; the effect of the major power transmission lines on the regions and countries; spatial issues between the countries; and current conflict zones (MEB, 2018).

A review of the geography curriculum of 2018 reveals that the topics related to the geography of the countries are discussed in a thematic way and in a functional structure instead of providing just information on each country separately. The curriculum was handled in a learning-based and systematic way. The curriculum is structured on the

basis of keeping the topics as a whole instead of including all the information found in the geography of the countries. Based on this approach, the geography of the countries and regional geography content of the previous years were removed. This coincides with the way in which the geography classes of secondary education in the USA and the UK are handled. It is also important in that it deviates from rote learning.

4. Results and Recommendations

Since 2005, no course called “world regional geography” has been taught in schools affiliated to MoNE (MEB). However, various characteristics of the countries are interspersed in the topics of geography class. Information on the characteristics of the countries is discussed in topics such as population, settlement, migration, transportation, commerce, natural resources, economic activities, rocks, soil, plants, tourism, cities, and regions. In this sense, it is observed that the information about the countries is included systematically and with a thematic structure during the preparation of the 2018 geography curriculum. However, the 2018 geography class curriculum remains weak in terms of recognizing the countries and learning the locations and geographical characteristics of the countries.

One of the important things to be done through education in schools is to stimulate students' interest in research and learning and enable them to gain the ability to find and benefit from the resources they need after school on their own. Once the students gain this ability, a major step towards lifelong learning and self-development will have been taken. On the other hand, due to constant changes in the characteristics of the countries, the knowledge learned through rote learning will have no validity.

It is unclear in the geography curriculum of 2018-2019 how to find the countries-related information, or where to find it. This is largely left to the understanding of the authors and the way they tackle the topics. In this context, the following recommendations on world countries geography education are important.

- Information about the world countries geography should be aimed at stimulating students' curiosity and should encourage them to do research.
- The way with which the countries are tackled should be as far as possible from the understanding that leads to rote learning and should not be of encyclopaedic information mass (Kızılcıoğlu, 2005). This is important in terms of learning the topics and enabling interpretation.
- Instead of using insignificant statistical information when dealing with the countries, the authors should utilize graphs, analysis, comparisons, and evaluations that allow the information to be used.
- In the selection of the topics regarding the countries, it is important to provide information on their functions as well as their equivalents in real life. Usefulness and necessity aspects of the topics should be taken into consideration in terms of handling style. If numerical data is to be used in the curriculum, then providing information on their interpretations would be beneficial. Even if these figures vary

by country, they should enable students to evaluate other countries correctly based on the interpretations learned. In addition, visual elements such as pictures, graphs, and diagrams should be handled by the teacher both in the class and in the extracurricular activities in a way that allows students to develop enthusiasm to get to know these countries. Thus, the aim should be for the students to gain the ability to find out information about countries by using technological tools in and outside the classroom. Through this aspect, the curriculum should aim to raise individuals who can think and criticize and who can comment and evaluate using such information.

- In terms of how the topics of countries' geography is handled, both the geographical locations and geographical characteristics of the countries should be included. In this regard, the curriculum must have a structure that allows the usage of an atlas in and outside of the classroom.
- In the geography of the countries of the previous years, it is seen that the topics are discussed almost like an encyclopaedic information ball, and each country's mountains, streams, lakes, population, agricultural products, mines, and important cities are listed one by one. This created the perception of "memorization is required for the geography class" in individuals whose geographical knowledge has yet to be fully settled and whose ability to make geographic analysis has not developed. However, nowadays, it is possible to access mountains of geographic data with the help of a computer or a smart mobile phone. However, what is important in education today is not to train people who can recite these characteristics one by one. Instead, it is to raise individuals who can analyse geographic information, make inferences, and develop a skill in an innovative sense. Similarly, the more country-specific information is functional and useful, the more life-oriented and useful it will be. It will also enable students to grasp the opportunities of our country and the conditions of the world countries and to make analyses.
- A chapter called "places and locations" should be included in the geography curriculum. This chapter should include map information, geographic information about countries, regions, and major cities in the world. Thus, the deficiency in the current geography curriculum will be eliminated.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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