



SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULA IN TURKEY: HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

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Abstract:

Social studies course is a pivotal course offered in the first three years of students' primary education. Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic to the present, there have been changes in the curricula of the social studies course in accordance with the needs and expectations of the related period in Turkish Republic history. Whether these changes introduced have fulfilled the mentioned expectations is the object of interest in this essay. Having considered these issues, answers to the following questions were sought within this research: a) what sorts of changes have been introduced to overcome the shortcomings of the old curricula, b) to what extent have these changes lived up to the characteristics of the period and does the field of the object or the content meet the requirements and to what extent does the content of the course align with the features of the educational sciences? Like the primary education curricula being used since the establishment of the Turkish Republic until today, social studies course's curricula were arranged by either the committee on education, the educational council or by a foreign educational consultant and external factors. The 1924 social studies course curriculum was in effect on a temporary basis due to being prepared quickly by the recently established Turkish Republic and it was in use only for two years. The 1926 social studies curriculum was the work of a government which just had completed its political revolution process and it was shaped around the ideas of an American educational scholar, Dewey. Next, in 1936 Turkish revolution was emphasized in the social studies curriculum, in which citizenship consciousness and patriotism was commonly stated. The 1948 social studies curriculum was in use for about 20 years and it accepted teaching knowledge as the principle idea and it created a dense amount of content by increasing the number of the chapters. In the social studies curriculum of 1968, all the objectives were set according to the student-oriented approach and it stayed in use for

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30 years. The social studies curriculum of 1998 carried the features of behaviourist approach since it was created under this approach. The 2005 social studies curriculum was a constructivist one prepared with the effects of external factors, since it was made for the purpose of being compatibility with the EU norms. Both the 2009 and the 2015 curricula were used to address values, special occasions and weeks, explanation of educational status and evaluation themes.

Keywords: Turkey, Turkish education, social studies, curricula, primary education

1. Introduction

Rapid changes and developments in science and technology have also occurred in the field of education as well. The education system which plays a significant role in sustaining social, cultural, political and economic development of a society has three basic components. These are student, teacher and curriculum. The regulations used in an education system are only meaningful so long as they take place in the curriculum. Curriculum covers the objectives that need to be attained, content that has to be arranged in accordance with the particular principles in order to attain these objectives, the methods to be applied, supplementary materials and tools and evaluation measurements showing to what extent these objectives are being achieved (Gözütok, 2003; Varış, 1996).

In Turkey, rapid innovation took place following the proclamation of the republic. In 1924, with the Law of Unification of Instruction (Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu), all educational institutions were unified under the Ministry of Education and some alterations were made in the schools' curricula. During the republican period, the curriculum of the social studies (hayat bilgisi) course underwent various changes. As it is known, the social studies course is a main course in the first three years of the primary education. During this course, natural and social environments are explained to the pupil. The objective is to help them learn about themselves, understand the environment and the environmental events, improve their living conditions, and to learn how to make use of the objects in their environment.

The social studies course which was first introduced during the Ministry of Public Ministry of Public Education (Maarif-i Umumiyye Nazırı) Saffet Pasha in 1869, continued in to the republican period curricula as well (Başar, 2004; Kodaman, 1999). Since the proclamation of the republic until today the social studies curriculum has been altered according to the changing needs and expectations of the country. These changes were made in 1924, 1926, 1936, 1948, 1968, 1998, 2005, 2009 and finally in 2015.

In respect to the primary education curricula, Akbaba (2004), Arslan (2000), Demirel (1992), Dündar (2002), Eskicumalı (1994), Gözütok (2003) and Tekişik (1992) in

their research evaluations were made regarding different phases of the republican period. As for the curriculum of social studies courses' historical process, Erkan (1996) did research on primary education and social studies curriculum from the beginning until 1996. Demir (1998) investigated the social studies course curriculum from 1926 till 1998. In Özbey's (2001) work 1948, 1968 and 1998 social studies courses and course's textbooks are examined. The examination of the 1998 social studies curriculum took place in Bektaş's study (2001). Uçar (2004) dealt with the reflections on the national education policies and on the social studies course books from a historical perspective; Özden (2006) on the other hand compared the 1998 and the 2004 social studies courses' pilot curricula. In the study of Akar and Keyvanoğlu (2016), an analysis was done to what extent multicultural education was included in social studies curricula in 2009 and 2015. According to the result of study, it was concluded that 2009 and 2015 social studies curricula did not give enough importance to multicultural education. Tay and Baş (2015) analyzed 2009 and 2015 social studies curricula for the sense of vision, program approach, targets, content, education status and assessment. According to the result of the research, it was determined that there are differences between two curricula in the areas of approach, targets, content, education status and assessment.

1.1 The Purpose and Importance of the Study

Studies regarding the effects of changes throughout the years in the primary schools' curriculum in social studies course since the republic are limited; the necessity of this research therefore has emerged. In this study, a total analysis of the objectives and content of social studies course during the republican period, the developments in the curriculum and the contents changes that occurred periodically in terms of the subjects to be selected are made.

It will draw attention to the issues whether changes in elementary grade curricula completely fulfilled the requirement specific to social studies course, and even whether requirements are determined were well or not at first, whether these requirements are compatible with the characteristics of the period or not, and for these reasons it was decided there was a need to carry out a study like this. In this study, analysis was done in whether there was an improvement in targets and contents of social studies curricula and improvement among curricula and meta-analysis was done with contents changing according to periods.

2. Method

In the collection of research data, document analysis occurred in which qualitative data collection methods was used. Document analysis includes the analysis of written materials which includes information about phenomena aimed to be analyzed (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008: 187). After analysis of related curricula documents, the titles to be used

for the comparison of programs was determined, data was collected within the frame of these titles. Curricula used in data collection process was accessed through different publications in Ministry of National Education, data obtained in the study was analysed according to the aims of research, results and findings of research was interpreted.

3. Findings

The education system of the new government was there to meet the desire of creating a new nation and the demands of the new country. In Turkish Republic, attempts for the formation of a new curriculum for these desires started in 1924. The curriculum for the primary education changed many times during the republican period and the content of social studies course also underwent significant changes during the same years.

3.1 The 1924 Primary Education Curriculum and the Social Studies Course

The 1924 primary education curriculum was prepared by combining the academic approach, needs and terms of the recently established Turkish Republic into account. In 1924 curriculum, the titles of the courses did not much differ from the previous curriculum, but basic changes were made in their contents. The 1924 curriculum, which was basically a test project, was in practice for two years. In the 1924 curriculum, basic topics on nature of research, agriculture, health, moral themes and citizenship knowledge, history and geography were the basic contents of the social studies course. A focus was created in moral themes and citizenship knowledge as well as history course, as to emphasize the topics indicating and underlining the events that took place in the recent history of the republic. Besides, these texts were required to have not only moral and literature values, additionally they were also required to be related to the national history, particularly the Independence War and Principles of the Republic. Social studies course in classroom hours depended on students' grade level: 1st grade was 4 hours, 2nd grade was 4 hours, and 3rd grade was 5 hours. They were totally 13 hours (Akyüz, 2008, Bektaş, 2001; Gülcan, 2003).

3.2 The 1926 Primary Education Curriculum and Social Studies Course

The 1926 primary education curriculum differs from the previous one mainly in terms of its form and content. In this curriculum, next to the chapters outline, their methods and the important points to be covered were also mentioned. In this curriculum, the concepts such as "Knowledge of life, collective teaching and work school" which were stressed upon in the report of John Dewey, who was invited to Turkey in 1924, were available. Therefore, the courses were no longer separated from each other; in the first three grades of primary education, courses were unified around life and society axle (Dewey, 1939; Kazamias, 1966). The purpose of the 1926 primary education curriculum was stated as turning primary school student into a useful citizen who would affect his

environment positively. However, the purpose, summarizing the objective of the curriculum does not clearly explain the features of a good citizen and to what extent her/him would actively influence his or her environment. Particularly in the first phase, of “unified training” where all courses revolve around the axle of life and society were unclear. In the 1926 curriculum objectives and basic methods for each course were stated. The 1926 curriculum was reformative in terms of its principle, method, courses and subjects as well as form and contents (Gülcan, 2003).

In the old curriculum nature, history and geography courses were listed separately, yet in the new curriculum these were unified in the first phase under the title of social studies. This course would be the pillar of social studies and other courses following it would be based on it. In the 1926 curriculum, national principles of education were covered by social studies course. In the curriculum, this objective was explained as “*Raising and improving cooperation and collectivist feelings among students through social studies course*”. Via the help of social studies course, on April 23 and October 29 ceremonies an emphasis was made to use these ceremonies as a way to explain the national sovereignty and the principles of the republic to the students. It was emphasised that when teaching social studies local conditions should always be taken into account. Particularly in geography the importance of this emphasis was necessary and it was also mentioned that, the subject of location and time should be paid great attention. For instance, in examining every single natural phenomenon, the detailed observation of the exact time this phenomenon took place is stated. Such as solar eclipse, formation of comet, flash of lightning, snow and hail. It was written that social studies would be even more exciting for children once they participated with their drawings, sand works and collections they themselves prepared. In social studies course, principle of “from close to distant” was adopted and during the course the students were asked to consider natural and social environment (Gülcan, 2003; Kültür Bakanlığı Dergisi, 1937; Uçar, 2004).

These are some of the main subject titles taking place in the 1926 social studies curriculum: Our behaviours in grade, school and outside the school, the direction between house and school, the elements we come across on our way to home or school, body and cleaning, farming and time spent on the farm, seasons, vineyard, garden, visiting carpenter and iron shops, winter clothes, winter entertainment, government, postal services, telegram, health institute, main diseases, agricultural experience in school garden, forests. Social studies course hours per week by different year are: 1st grade was 4 hours, 2nd grade was 4 hours, and 3rd grade was 4 hours. They were totally 12 hours (Akyüz, 2008; Kültür Bakanlığı Dergisi, 1937).

3.3 The 1936 Primary Education Curriculum and Social Studies Course

After the 1926 primary education curriculum was undergoing revolutionary changes in various fields. In the face of these recent events it necessitated, amendments in the

social studies curriculum as well. The primary education commission which was created upon the order of the Ministry of Culture in 1935 started its mission in accordance with the directive. While forming a new primary school curriculum, the commission took into the account the principles of Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) program, recent pedagogic thoughts and secondary school programs. Since Turkish Revolution had not yet been completed, the 1926 primary school curriculum did not exactly reflect the principles of the new regime, thus the 1936 curriculum had higher importance in that respect. In the first section of the curriculum objectives of primary school, principles of national education were given and then teaching and training principles of primary school were detailed (Kıncal, 1993; Kültür Bakanlığı Dergisi, 1937). In the 1936 primary school curriculum, every chapter had the main objective of the course and the significant points that the teacher should pay attention to were explained. Besides, explanations were given about the significant points that should be used in terms of training and education principles.

According to the 1936 primary education curriculum, the new curriculum would save students from the burden of memorizing; the students would become more intimately associated with natural problems by making observations and examinations through real topics. Unified education was accepted as the method of primary education yet towards the end of the third year it was separated into groups and branches degree by degree in order to improve the students' analysis skills of events and objects in accord with scientific rules. Social studies course which were taught four hours weekly in three grades were raised to 5 hours in the 1st year, 6 hours in the 2nd year, 7 hours in the 3rd year in the 1936 curriculum which means that the increase was 50%. The objectives of the 1936 curriculum were "*strong republic, nationalist, populist, statism, secularist and revolutionist citizens; educating students who will deeply love the Turkish nation and the Turkish government and help extending this love to all citizens*" was also stated among the subjects of social studies" (Akbaba, 2004; Kültür Bakanlığı Dergisi, 1937; Salmoni, 2003).

Difference between 1926 curriculum, and the 1936 social studies course curriculum were new topics such as the goods sold in the grocery store or her and spice seller, winter entertainments, new year, military service, nature that changes with seasons, works that change with seasons, games, entertainments, telephone, administration structure in cities and towns, visiting a village, observing the sky. Social studies course hours per week by grade were: 1st grade was 5 hours, 2nd grade was 6 hours, and 3rd grade was 7 hours. They were totally 18 hours (Kültür Bakanlığı Dergisi, 1937).

3.4 The 1948 Primary Education Curriculum and Social Studies Course

The new curriculum prepared in 1948 was in use for about 20 years. The 1948 curriculum adopted knowledge teaching as its principle. In the 1948 program, the

objectives of national education were grouped under the headings of social, personal, human relations and economic life aspects. It created a denser content by increasing the number of the topics and the units to be covered for each course. In the 1948 primary education curriculum one of the basic missions of primary school was to be a tool for “indoctrinating national culture” (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1948).

In the 1948 curriculum, it was stated that in the first three years of the first semester, unified education would be followed and all the other courses in this semester were to form around the social studies course. According to the 1948 curriculum, social studies course was an observation, life, work and experiment course. Therefore, the aim in the course was to create an environment that would enable direct contact for students with objects and events and analyse them in accordance with their age and level. The subjects of social studies courses were their own environment which directly affected their senses. In the first and second grades, the child’s close environment was their house, school, district or location; in the third grade the whole city or village. Social studies course’s subjects for each grade formed an organic unity that was divided into life topic. Every life topic was given as item for each grade in curricula. Although social studies course constituted as the base of natural sciences, history, geography and citizenship, it differed from them greatly in terms of its nature. The course aims were to teach students the natural and social reality as a whole in accordance with his or her psychological condition. Therefore, social studies course thought children an animal or plant not in terms of its description, classification or anatomy but rather in terms of its place in the environment and the child-nature relationship. The objectives of social studies course in the 1948 primary education curriculum are thus: *“Helping first, second and third year students to observe and analyse home, school and their village, town and city, nature, family, behaviour and social life; making them gain good habits when it came to loving and protecting natures beauty and objects; laying the foundation for students’ strong loyalty to the nation by developing their love, respect, rightfulness, cooperation and responsibility towards their home, school and people around them; forming a sense of history by giving examples from daily events, daily objects, memorials, traditions, life stories of well-known people; enabling them to re-examine their environment and life conditions geographically; preparing them step by step for appropriate views by analyzing daily events in nature and society”* (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1948).

Differences between 1936 and the 1948 social studies course curriculum were covered in new topics such as pets in our houses, games for garden and street, market place and the things to be seen in market place, life stories of Atatürk and İnönü, preparing winter food for home, fixing our worn-out clothes, furnace, brazier or stove at home, washing day at home, sewing the rips, agriculture courses in school garden, history of our family and house, regulations for vehicles, history of our city and village, meaning of May 19, home products’ week, washing day, radio. Social studies course hours per week by year are that: 1st grade was 5 hours, 2nd grade was 6 hours, and 3rd

grade was 7 hours. They were totally 18 hours (Kültür Bakanlığı Dergisi, 1937; Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1948).

3.5 The 1968 Primary Education Curriculum and Social Studies Course

The 1968 primary school curriculum was in practice for about 30 years. The most significant innovation introduced with the 1968 curriculum was applying the unification approach which was established for social studies course in the former curricula to now 4th and 5th year students. With this curriculum, the social studies course, social studies and science courses were also adopted as focus courses. In the 1968 curriculum, all the objectives were student oriented (Akbaba, 2004; Binbaşıoğlu, 2003; Gözütok, 2003; Özbey, 2001; Tekişik, 1992).

Five main headings were selected for the social studies course. These were: Developing abilities and skills for learning one's own environment; teaching citizenship duties and responsibilities; getting students to comprehend human relations in the society; developing student skills and capabilities in economic living; improving student skills in order for them to live better. While determining five main objectives for the social studies course, no different objectives were set for grades. Setting the same objectives for each grade created trouble in determining objectives for grades. Although the numbers of units in the 1968 social studies course curriculum were less dense than those of the 1948's, sub-titles of units were analyzed in detail (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1948; Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 1968).

According to the 1968 curriculum, the social studies course is an observation, living and experiment course. Therefore, the aim of the course was to create an environment that would enable students' direct contact with objects and events and analyze them in accord with their age and level. The subjects of the social studies courses were their close environment which directly addresses their senses. In the first and second grades, a child's own environment was his or her house, school, district or location; in the third year, the whole city or village. On the whole the curriculum was a framework. That is why units are set under main items to address the common needs of the country. But in the units which needed restrictions, details were given. Setting the details related to environment and grade level depended on the teacher and the students. There was no regulation for sticking to the line of the units, subjects and number of the units. The subjects which were not common in students' environment or impossible to analyze at school could be left outside the scope of units. The topics or units not indicated in the program were still necessary to be studied as a characteristic of that specific environment needed to be added to the program. In such cases, a unit outside the scope of the program could be taught. Cotton in Adana, fishing in coastal cities etc. According to the 1968 curriculum, teaching "from close to distant" principle was significant. So, the first step should always be taken from that particular point; such as the village, town or city. The social studies course was the backbone of the first three

years of the primary education. There needed to be a connection between the course and Turkish, mathematics, painting and physical education courses which were expression and skill courses. The subjects of social studies course should be reviewed by some methods. In the 1968 curriculum, the necessity for trips and observations and making use of all the tools and materials in social studies course was stated and the necessity for celebrating national and religious fests on time as well as local independence days (Milli Eđitim Bakanlıđı, 1968).

Differences between the 1948 and the 1968 social studies course curriculum were covered in new topics such as protection against vehicles and accidents, new year celebrations, new year's night activities, changes in our holidays, the sea, the beach, swimming, postal services, letter, postman, protecting our health, military service. Social studies course hours per week by grade were: 1st grade was 6 hours, 2nd grade was 6 hours, and 3rd grade was 6 hours. They were totally 18 hours (Milli Eđitim Bakanlıđı, 1968).

3.6 The 1998 Primary Education Curriculum and Social Studies Course

Following the adoption of an 8-year primary education in 1997, the Ministry of Education prepared a new primary education curriculum. The 1998 curriculum was prepared according to a behaviourist approach. In that respect, the units were written under main titles which all addressed the needs nationwide. Yet, in units which required limits, the details were also given. Determining the other details to be covered was assigned by the environment, the grade level, and it depended on the teacher and the students. It was not obligatory to follow strictly the order of the units and the subjects in the curriculum while studying the units. It was stated that uncommon events, subjects that were impossible to study in school could be left outside the scope of units. Also, the subjects that were not included in the curriculum but still necessary to mention due to the characteristics of the environment could be added as well. In this curriculum learning and teaching activities, methods, resources, video cassettes, and measurement and evaluation which were absent in previous curricula were also available (Kocaoluk & Kocaoluk, 1998a).

The principles concerning the social studies curriculum were as such: Since each student is a unique being with his or her own needs, interests, skills and learning capacity; the starting point in training and education would be based on student's readiness level to learn. In applying the curriculum, the order should follow; from unknown to known, simple to complex, easy to hard, physical to notional. The main purpose of the social studies course should be developing knowledge, attitude and skills that will enable the student to establish harmony with his/her society. Therefore, group activities, role playing and games should be commonly made use of. There was no obligation to stick to the order of the units. The teacher could show additional units in line with the needs of the environment or skip the parts which do not address the

environment. During the course, teacher should adopt a role of a guide. Learning activity should be accomplished through active participation and experimenting with the students. The social studies course should be in parallel with Turkish, mathematics, science, painting, music and physical education courses. National and religious fests, local independence, celebration days, and anniversaries should be celebrated on correct days and weeks. During the course, tools such as video camera and overhead projection should be made use of. The materials that help students learn by audio visual methods should be used; trips and observations should be planned. In the 1998 curriculum, the banners, posters, video cassettes and other tools and materials that can be used in the courses were stated one by one. In the 1998 curriculum, in addition to the general objectives, specific objectives the unit plans for each grade were stated in detail. Objectives and behaviour number for each grade were first indicated in the 1998 curriculum. Again, for the first-time teaching materials, banners, posters and videocassettes were mentioned and stated in detail in this curriculum (Kocaoluk & Kocaoluk, 1998b).

Differences between 1968, and the 1998 social studies course curriculum were covered in new topics such as telephone use, children's health and self-knowing approach, democracy at home and school, responsibilities and rights, conscious consumerism and efficiency, environmental sensitivity were indicated social studies course hours per week by grade were: 1st grade was 5 hours, 2nd grade was 5 hours, and 3rd grade was 5 hours. They were totally 15 hours (Kocaoluk & Kocaoluk, 1998b).

3.7 The 2005 Primary Education Curriculum and Social Studies Course

As a result of constructivist approach being accelerated in Turkey at the end of the 1990s, in 2004 a comprehensive study was initiated to develop new primary education curricula. In the study carried out; the reasons for implementing the curricula, notion of information and developments in information, society approach, developing an education approach based on lifelong learning principle and compatibility with the EU norms, were all mentioned. The 2005 primary education curriculum emphasized sustainability and growth of the Turkish Republic, worldwide developments, the EU norms, education approach, determining the current education specifications of Turkey, evaluating the successes and failures, and taking these results as reference points. With the application of the 2005 curriculum, the behaviourist approach was abandoned and instead constructivist approach was initiated. As opposed to the fragmented curriculum approach which was based on primary and secondary education system, the curricula were made suitable for 8-year continuous education (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2005).

In the 2005 primary education curriculum, teachers became more than just information transmitters; instead they became guides in the social studies course. In the 2005 social studies curriculum, human being was regarded as a whole with all his biological, psychological, social and cultural aspects and was viewed as both the subject

and object of the change. From this point of view, three main learning spaces were created namely “individuality”, “society” and “nature” and change was considered as a more general dimension covering all these learning spaces. In real life, contents of all these learning spaces and change intersected; they could only be separated artificially from one another for training and educational purposes. As a prerequisite to the unified teaching approach which was specifically adopted for the social studies course, three themes, that simultaneously encircle these learning spaces, were determined. The names of these themes in the curriculum were, “My Enthusiasm for School”, “My Perfect Home” and “Past, Present and Tomorrow”. In this curriculum, learning and teaching activities were underlined as important and critical elements. *“The initial objective of the social studies curriculum was to help students gain basic life skills and to develop positive characteristics”*. Besides, *“...in the social studies course students will get acquainted with information that can be used as the base for social studies, applied sciences and technology course in their 4th and 5th grades curriculum”*. It was expected that with the 2005 social studies curriculum, students would gain these skills: Critical thinking, creative thinking, questioning, communication, problem solving, using information technologies, enterprising, fluency in Turkish, decision making, effective use of resources, preserving safety and protection, self-management, getting to know basic concepts of themes. Additionally, it was expected that the social studies course’s curriculum, would help students develop self-respect, self-trust, sociability, patience, tolerance, love, respect, peace, charity, accuracy, honesty, modernity, patriotism, ability to protect and elevate cultural values. Social studies course hours per week by grade were: 1st grade was 5 hours, 2nd grade was 5 hours, and 3rd grade was 5 hours. They were totally 15 hours (Akyüz, 2008; Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2005).

3.8 The 2009 Primary Education Curriculum and Social Studies Course

The vision of the 2009 social studies curricula was the student as the key criterion and it was to improve the student in every aspect. Emphasized was put on not having memorization and passive curriculum instead a participatory and active one. It excluded information which rapidly changed and date which have no correspondence in the life of child. It was asserted that the aim of curricula should be improving mental skill and personality of the child in every aspect, not to store lots of information. According to the curricula of 2009, social studies course does not have to be taught in seriousness. Instead, the school and curriculum should focus on the needs of children and making sure they are having fun. In this sense, social studies course should be the one where every child has fun and participated joyfully. Ministry of National Education carried out studies in order to integrate curricula of other courses with the curricula of social studies. There was an interaction between Kemalism and other inter-disciplines (Psychological Counselling and Guidance, Sports Culture and Olympic Education, Disaster Prevention and Living Secure, Improving Career Awareness, Human rights

and Citizenship, Health Culture, Entrepreneurship, Private Education), integrity of the program was reviewed (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2009: 6-7; Safran, Donmez, Yazici, Ciftci, 2016).

Apart from basic living skills of children, the program of social studies aimed to improve positive personal qualities as well. In addition to this, there was an exception that children would have information which would form basis for social studies, science and technology courses. Therefore, “acquisitions” were formed in the program in a way that would integrate these themes (help student improve basic life skills and positive personal qualities, give them opportunity to acquire information that would form basis for social studies, science and technology courses). Social studies course hours per week by grade were: 1st grade was 5 hours, 2nd grade was 5 hours, and 3rd grade was 5 hours. They were totally 15 hours (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2009: 11; Tay & Baş, 2015: 363-364).

3.9 The 2015 Primary Education Curriculum and Social Studies Course

The vision of course was determined as such in 2015 social studies curricula: *“The vision of social studies course curricula is to educate students to have basic skills of living, who knows himself, sustains healthy and secure life, is sensible towards nature and environment, has high self-confidence, at peace with his environment and himself, internalizes national and sentimental values”* (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2015: 1).

Within the frame of this course, it is expected from students in first grade to know school and its function, obey school rules, communicate with others at school and home, use mass communication tools and resources correctly at home, pay attention to personal care and hygiene, take necessary measures in protecting health, obey security rules at school, home and travel; have information, skill and attitude, know general characteristics of his country, national ceremonies and Atatürk, religious ceremonies, plants and animals in the close environment, seasons and their characteristics and recycling (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2015: 5).

Within the frame of this course, it is expected from students in second grade to know the close environment of school, participate in the process of decision making about class, cooperate with friends and participate in group activities, spend money responsibly, give address of his home, describe his relatives, cooperation and solidarity with the family, have a healthy diet, know necessary point for healthy growing and improvement, obey traffic rules and pay attention to security at traffic; have information, skill and attitude about Turkish flag, Turkish National Anthem, leadership of Atatürk in War of Independence, national ceremonies and religious ceremonies, location of Turkey on earth, elements of cultural heritage in the close environment, importance of growing plants and planting tree, reasons for natural events and disasters caused by humans and environmental pollution (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2015: 11).

Within the frame of this course, it is expected from students in third grade to draw outline of classroom and school, analyze characteristics of school, express individual changes, demand and needs from school democratically, have information, skill and attitude about neighbour relations, saving at home, healthy diet, having a diet based on specific season, characteristics of conscious consumer, traffic signs, accidents that can possibly happen at school and at home, disasters, use of national common goods, growing terms of vegetables and fruits, administrative units in his environment, historical aspects in the close environment, leadership of Atatürk, finding the direction, growing terms of fruits and vegetables, protecting nature and environment in reaction with the people and natural environment (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2015: 17). Social studies course hours per week by grade are: First grade was 4 hours, second grade was 4 hours, and third grade was 3 hours. They were totally 11 hours (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2015: 3).

4. Conclusion

The reasons underlying the urge to prepare a new curriculum in education system are the hardships encountered within the present curriculum, the opinions mentioned in the national or international meetings to solve the mentioned hardships, demands of new generation students and teachers, changes in the social structure and developments in various branches of science.

First time that a social studies course was introduced in the Ottoman period was during the Ministry of Public Education of Saffet Pasha in 1869 and then it took place in all of the republican period curricula (Başar, 2004; Kodaman, 1999). Like the primary education curricula prepared since the establishment of the Turkish Republic until today, the social studies course's curricula were arranged by means of either the Committee on Education (Heyet-i İlmiye), the Educational Council (Maarif Şurası), foreign educational consultant or external factors. The 1924 social studies curriculum was a temporary curriculum which was prepared quickly by the recently established Turkish Republic and it was in use for only two years. The 1926 social studies curriculum was the work of a government which just had completed its political revolution process and it was heavily shaped by the ideas of an American educational scholar, Dewey. In the 1936 social studies curriculum, Turkish revolution was emphasized, citizenship consciousness was commonly stated. The 1948 social studies curriculum was in use for about 20 years and it accepted teaching knowledge as the principle and created a dense content by increasing the number of the units. In the 1968 social studies curriculum, the objectives were set for a student-oriented approach and stayed in use for 30 years. The 1998 social studies curriculum carried the feature of a framework of the behaviourist approach. The 2005 social studies curriculum was a

constructivist one prepared due to external factors. That factor being in compatibility with the EU norms.

In Turkey, from beginning to today the number of the primary education curricula and the size of the social studies course curricula have continuously increased. Although at the beginning, the primary education curricula were limited to ten or more pages and the social studies course curricula was only a few pages long, the latest primary education curriculum is thousands of pages and the social studies course curriculum is hundreds of pages in total.

Most of the curricula belonging to the republican period put the teacher and the units in the centre and not the student; instead of creating flexible and free minded students who applied scientific method, the students were trained as individuals merely copying the words of the teacher and the textbook, lacking sufficient equipment concerning contemporary life. The Turkish curricula is basically prepared by a few authorities from the ministry and some teachers who simply check the current curriculum, make additions or exclusions from the current curriculum in order to prepare a new one. The curricula should not be prepared in this way, instead there should be, practice, evaluation and advanced corrections applied (Akbaba, 2004; Bektaş, 2001; Demir, 1998; Demirel, 1992; Simsek, 2009; Tekişik, 1992; Uçar, 2004; Varış, 1996). Despite the criticisms, the 2005 social studies curriculum can be accepted as a better one since it was discussed in broader meetings and changed according to the feedbacks coming from the previous pilot curriculum amendments.

Curriculum changes basically need to originate from the needs and life style of the country. It is not a right manner to disregard the previous curricula while preparing a new primary education curricula and introducing every new curriculum with the recurrent political statement “*The first and the most comprehensive educational reform of the Turkish Republic*”. Throughout the history of the Turkish Republic education curriculum, it has repeated the statement mentioned above. This causes negligence in the Turkish education system which has a dynamic and functional structural need to meet the changing social demands from the first years of the republic to now; particularly in curriculum development efforts of the primary education field. School curricula are like dynamic organic bodies that are constantly developing. Thus, it would be more meaningful to consider the fact that the new curricula reflect the previous ones and as a result of societal improvements, some innovations will eventually emerge.

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