

Social Studies Lesson in Türkiye As A Means of Citizenship Transfer: A Perspective from The Critical Citizenship Education Approach

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ABSTRACT

In this study, it was aimed to examine and evaluate the Social Studies Curriculum, which was announced by the Board of Education in 2018 and since then has been implemented. The curriculum was examined according to the critical citizenship approach, which is one of the citizenship approaches, taking into account the grade levels. This study was carried out using a case study design which is appropriate to a qualitative research methodology. Document analysis was used in accordance with the research design and objectives. According to some important findings obtained in the study, it has been observed that the program emphasizes the sense of identity as much as possible while neglecting content aimed at allowing individuals to freely express themselves. The program is shaped around a centralized identity understanding focused on culture, state, and society. The skills of active participation are addressed only in the context of maintaining the existing order and solidarity. The importance of democratic social movements and organized struggle, how they are or can be utilized, the inequalities that exist or may exist in society, and how these issues can be resolved; as well as concrete examples and practice-based information on how the dominant discourse is or can be effective in any area of political or social life, are not included. In general, it has been revealed that social studies education in Turkey, which aims to cultivate effective and responsible citizens, is not approached from a critical citizenship perspective and its content does not align with this approach.

Keywords: Social studies education, citizenship education, critical pedagogy, critical thinking

INTRODUCTION

The endeavor of individuals to explore and comprehend their surroundings, commencing from birth, may either flourish or dwindle contingent upon the attributes of their environment. This underscores the critical importance, particularly in childhood, of crafting learning environments and educational curricula that provide enriching learning opportunities, fostering active student engagement. The primary aim of such learning experiences should be to facilitate self-discovery and exploration of the environment by children (Arend, Gove, & Sroufe, 1979; Green, 2002; Çukur, 2011; Budak; Gençtanırım Kurt and Kula, 2018). By doing so, it becomes feasible to sustain an individual's curiosity, propensity for inquiry, and pursuit of discovery over the course of their life (Liquin & Lombrozo, 2020).

According to Henry Groux (2003), despite the democratic nature of the governmental system, the education dispensed within schools, recognized as one of the most potent agents of socialization, is designed not only to perpetuate the prevailing economic framework but also other societal structures. Knowledge is not devoid of ties to society and consequently, to the individuals molded by society. Knowledge construction occurs symbolically through engagement with others within our societal milieu. It follows that the knowledge generation is significantly influenced by culture, context, traditions, and

historical processes (McLaren, 2002, p. 63). In various aspects of our lives, whether consciously or subconsciously, ranging from the assessment of facts or events, value judgments, television preferences, voting behavior, to travel destinations, we are subject to the impacts of the social construction process. Essentially, we are educated within the framework of a concealed curriculum (Rodriguez, 2009). Thus, critical education theorists are in search of ways to help students understand the social functions assumed by certain forms of knowledge (McLaren, 2002, p. 63). This quest has gradually revealed the fundamental principles of critical pedagogy.

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Comprehending Critical Pedagogy

The evolution of approaches and scholarly investigations within the realm of education, akin to developments across various disciplines throughout history, has the capacity to alter the interpretation assigned to any given concept, rendering the formulation of a uniform definition quite challenging. This scenario applies to the conceptualization of critical pedagogy as well. While crafting a universally embraced definition remains arduous, critical pedagogy generally denotes the educational processes geared toward fostering students' critical stance towards oppressive societal conditions (Ross, 2013, p. 28-29). As inferred from the definition, the educational content delivered in schools should aim to instill in students the inclination to question and grasp the prevailing societal circumstances, and if necessary, effect transformative change. This approach holds the promise of nurturing a more egalitarian, just, and non-coercive social milieu as opposed to mere perpetuation of the status quo.

The Frankfurt School undeniably exerts a substantial influence on the development of critical pedagogy. From the perspective of the Frankfurt School, historical awareness stands as a fundamental facet of critical thinking, underpinning the notion that this consciousness emerges through social and individual interactions as well as subjective experiences. It is accentuated that the pursuit of predictability, verifiability, transferability, and functionality, essential tenets of positivist thought, has undergone a shift over time to a dialectical mode of thinking accentuating historical, relational, and normative facets of social inquiry and knowledge (Groux, 2003, p. 45). Moreover, it is evident that Paulo Freire emerges as a prominent figure within the domain of critical pedagogy. Through his seminal work titled "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", Freire has made significant contributions to the realm of critical pedagogy, elucidating the core tenets of this educational approach. Within this work, Freire critiques the prevailing educational paradigm employing the metaphor of banking education and advocates for education as a vehicle for emancipation. To this end, he embraces the concept of praxis.

Freire (2003) describes the traditional view of education with the banking model, where students are seen as empty vessels into which teachers deposit knowledge. In this model, concepts are memorized rather than understood. The more a teacher fills these empty vessels, the better a teacher they are considered to be. Similarly, the more receptive these vessels are to being filled, the better students they are deemed to be. This perspective treats education as a means of saving, where teachers are investors and students are investment objects. The more students are occupied with storing the material imposed on them, the more stunted their critical

thinking skills—essential for engaging with and transforming their world—become. In other words, as students adopt the passive roles imposed upon them, they are more inclined to accept the world as it is. This educational model serves the interests of the oppressors, preventing the oppressed from transforming themselves and the world they live in, and keeps education as a tool for maintaining "beings for others." To become free individuals, the banking model of education must be entirely rejected. Emancipation is praxis, which involves people thinking and acting to transform the world they live in. Therefore, Freire proposes the problem-posing model of education instead (Yılmaz, 2016). According to this model, education is based on comprehension rather than knowledge transfer. In this approach, students are not passive but are critical co-investigators in dialogue with their teachers. The problem-posing model affirms people as beings in the process of becoming, and this unfinished nature of humanity, along with the transformative characteristic of reality, makes education a continuous activity. In this case, education is continually recreated within praxis. Giroux (2003, p. 36) also references the delicate relationship between theory and practice in praxis, highlighting that theory is an aim of liberating practice. From all these explanations, it is evident that schools must provide environments that foster and reinforce individuals' understanding of freedom.

Education in schools is influenced by factors such as culture, ideology, and class differences. Therefore, according to critical pedagogy, the education provided in schools is never neutral and objective. This education is organized and structured according to specific purposes (McLaren, 2002, p. 63). Every country shapes its education system and content according to its national goals and interests. For example, history education is one of the fields most influenced by a country's ideology. Depending on the adopted approach, nations can focus on different elements when defining their pasts. In the 19th century, Germans emphasized culture and language in historical research, while the French focused on their past victories (Ersanlı, 2018, p. 32). In Turkey, the approach is not very different from these countries. Although the education system may change every few years or decades, the fundamental structure and objectives of the education system are determined in accordance with the Basic Law of National Education and aligned with the goals of national education. Among these goals, there are objectives compatible with critical pedagogy. Particularly, goals such as fostering students with free and scientific thinking skills, a broad worldview, and creativity, providing education within the principles of universality and equality, considering students' interests and talents in educational settings, and ensuring equality of opportunity and facilities align with the principles of critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogues see one of the fundamental functions of schools as social reproduction. They ask the question: How do schools transfer social status and class differences to subsequent generations? They attempt to explain the answer to this question with the concept of social reproduction. According to them, social reproduction refers to the intergenerational reproduction of social class (i.e., working-class students become working-class adults; middle-class students become middle-class adults). Schools reproduce the structures of social life by colonizing student subjectivities (socializing them) and establishing the social practices characteristic of the broader society (McLaren, 2002, p. 77). As mentioned above, education should be provided according to students' interests and abilities, aiming to transform this reproduction. Thus, a working-class child will not remain a working-class adult in the future but will be able to develop themselves as a different individual.

Critical Pedagogy for Critical Citizenship

At the core of critical pedagogy lies the concept of critique. Critique enables individuals to see beyond what exists or what is presented to them. Therefore, an individual with developed critical thinking skills can more easily perceive societal inequalities and distortions, understand oppressive environments, and effect transformation. Critical pedagogy, in particular, rejects the traditional student-teacher relationship in which the teacher is active and knowledgeable, while students are passive recipients of the teacher's knowledge. In a critical classroom environment where this relationship does not exist, teaching relies on the experiences of both students and teachers. Consequently, students develop a more meaningful understanding of the world and gain the awareness to bring about social changes through their actions (Ross, 2013). Hence, it is deemed crucial that citizenship education is delivered as critical citizenship education. Such an education is believed to enable both students and adults to creatively construct an alternative future (Dudley, Robinson, and Taylor, 1999).

According to Kincheloe (2008, pp. 6-27), critical pedagogy, in its fundamental characteristics, embraces an educational perspective centered on the concepts of justice and equality, and it holds the belief that education is inherently political. In this pedagogy, good schools do not blame students for their failures or deprive them of the forms of knowledge they bring to the classroom. In other words, they consider students' social characteristics and cultural backgrounds. Knowing and learning are not solely intellectual and scientific activities but also encompass practical and sensory activities instilled with passionate spirit. Critical pedagogy is particularly concerned with groups and individuals whose lives are affected by

discrimination and poverty. It employs Paulo Freire's concept of generative themes to understand words, the world, and the processes of problem formation. In critical pedagogy, teachers are seen as researchers, and one of their important goals is to strive to better understand their students. Critical pedagogy seeks a delicate balance between social change and the intellectual development of students. It addresses the experiences and needs of individuals facing oppression and marginalization in society. Furthermore, with a sound critical pedagogical approach, it is possible to develop students' socio-individual imagination, provide them with the ability to interpret the prevailing understanding of power and its impacts on society and individuals, and cultivate the social skills necessary for active participation in a more inclusive democratic society (Kincheloe, 2007, pp. 36-39). From all these statements, it can be understood that critical pedagogy inherently aims to cultivate active and responsible citizens. In this respect, it can be stated that it is closely related to the social studies course taught at the primary education level in Turkey, which aims to instill a sense of citizenship.

Critical citizenship education should enable creative and critical thinking, allowing students to question, scrutinize, and, where possible, work towards maintaining or transforming social structures (Billingham, 2016). Considering that society is composed of individuals, it can be said that society is continuously shaped by these individuals, just as individuals are continuously shaped by society. In this formative process, the role of the school is highly significant. As is inherent in critical pedagogy, educators should perceive the school not merely as a site for indoctrination or socialization but as a cultural space that supports the student's self-transformation (McLaren, 2002, pp. 61-62). Particularly, the class-based societal structure and capitalist environment of today's world have permeated every aspect of social life, knowledge, and culture, resulting in individuals becoming alienated from their own experiences, emotions, creativity, and desires (Plant, 1992, p. 1).

It can be asserted that teachers occupy a central position in cultivating critical citizens. All educators should be committed to the goal of constructing a non-exploitative and socially just society. A critical educator understands that any issue has multiple dimensions and often views these dimensions in connection with class, race, and gender interests (McLaren, 2002, p. 62). An educator with these qualities should plan teaching processes with a focus on more individualized approaches. By creating a more participatory environment in the classroom, they should establish classroom rules that are flexible and can be modified when necessary. In this respect, it can be stated that critical citizenship education possesses characteristics that align with contemporary educational

Table 1. A conceptual framework for critical citizenship education (adapted from Johnson and Morris, 2010)

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Politics/Ideology</i>	<i>Society/Common Understanding</i>	<i>Personality/subjectivity</i>	<i>Praxis (Practice)/Interaction</i>
Knowledge	Knowledge and understanding of history, societies, systems, oppressions and injustices, power structures, and macro-structural relationships	Knowledge of culture, power, and social changes; non-mainstream writings and ideas in addition to dominant discourses	Knowledge about one's own position, culture, and circumstances; sense of identity	Knowledge of how collective action can affect systematic change, how knowledge itself is power, and how behaviors can influence society and injustice
Skills	Skills in critical and structural social analysis; capacity to politicize concepts of culture, knowledge, and power; capacity to explore deeper causalities	Skills in dialogue, collaboration, and interaction; ability to critically interpret others' perspectives; capacity for holistic thinking	Capacity to critically reflect on one's 'position' within communities and society; independent critical thinking; speaking with one's own voice	Skills in critical thinking and active participation; ability to collaborate in challenging the status quo; capacity to envision a better world
Values	Commitment to values against injustice and oppression	Inclusive dialogical relationship with others' identities and values	Considering concerns for social justice and self-respect	Being knowledgeable, responsible, and reflective in ethical action
Attitudes	Actively questioning; importance of relationships with society and the public; stance and action against injustice and oppression	Socially conscious; collaborative; responsible towards oneself and others; willing to learn with others	Critical perspective; autonomy; taking responsibility in thought, feeling, and action; advanced thinking; thinking related to reality	Belief and motivation to change society; civic courage; responsibility for decisions and actions

paradigms. It can also be suggested that a student who undergoes such an educational experience will be capable of taking initiative to transform the society they live in for the better when necessary.

One of the most comprehensive studies on what exactly the content of critical citizenship education should entail is that by Johnson and Morris (2010). Drawing on the work of these researchers, framework information aimed at better understanding critical citizenship education is presented in Table 1.

Social Studies Education and Critical Citizenship

According to Friere (1985), democracy requires oppressed groups to develop political determination, organize, and take action to achieve their goals, suggesting that education can facilitate the development of such democracy. The inclusion of concepts such as democracy, civic duties and responsibilities, social rights, among others, within the social studies curriculum makes it one of the most crucial subjects for educating future active citizens and contributing to the advancement of democracy. Therefore, it can be said that the fundamental aim of social studies education is to cultivate 'good citizens', which also signifies having a good society (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The qualities of good citizens are clearly discernible from the social studies

curriculum and extensively discussed in related scientific literature (Minister of Education (MoE), 2018; Akın, 2021; Horst, Erdal, & Jdid, 2020; Görmez, 2018; Dere, 2019; İbrahimoglu, 2018; Çayır & Gürkaynak, 2007; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004; Öcal & Kemer kaya, 2011; Acun, Demir, & Göz, 2010; Ross, 2004; Valentino et al., 2008). Generally, being a good citizen entails embracing national values and feeling a sense of belonging to the community, which underscores the important role of social studies in cultural transmission and citizen upbringing.

Social studies also aims to equip future citizens with critical thinking skills, a goal that has been integral to all social studies curricula from past to present. In the context of curriculum skills dimensions, the first skill imparted to students in the social studies curriculum prepared during a significant philosophical change in 2004 in Turkey was critical thinking (MoE, 2005). In the 2018 updated curriculum, although not listed first, critical thinking remains one of the most important skills (MoE, 2018). Upon examining the newly introduced 2024 curriculum, it is observed that critical thinking skills are integrated into the program in relation to numerous achievements. Furthermore, this program introduces the concept of civic literacy, which differs from previous curricula (MoE, 2024). These program features indicate a relationship between social studies and critical citizenship education.

Regarding the content and objectives of social studies, there are perspectives asserting that it perpetuates cultural transmission and the maintenance of the status quo in citizenship transfer, which poses a barrier to critical thinking (Henry, 1963; Bestor, 1953). However, literature also acknowledges views suggesting that a social studies curriculum emphasizing critical thinking can contribute to social reproduction or reconstruction (Leming & Ellington, 2003; Ross, 2004). The 2024 draft program continuously references responsible citizenship in maintaining social order. Nevertheless, from a critical theory perspective, emphasis is placed on continually transforming social structures, with schools playing a crucial role in this transformation by developing a democratic understanding aimed at liberating individuals (Demirtaş & Özer, 2015). Therefore, from a critical theory standpoint, it would be more acceptable for the social studies program not only to sustain the current social order but also to better change and transform it through the cultivation of active citizens. Although the conceptual framework refers to the 2024 draft program, since it has not yet been implemented, this study aims to examine and evaluate the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum based on the approach of critical citizenship education, considering the grade levels. To achieve this goal, the following research questions were addressed:

- What is the inclusion status of the Politics/Ideology dimension of critical citizenship in the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum?
- What is the inclusion status of the Society/Common Understanding dimension of critical citizenship in the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum?
- What is the inclusion status of the Praxis (Practice)/Interaction dimension of critical citizenship in the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum?
- What is the inclusion status of the Personality/subjectivity dimension of critical citizenship in the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum?"

METHOD

Research Design

This study was conducted using a case study design appropriate to qualitative research methodology. Case studies involve detailed description of individuals or situations and analysis of themes (Creswell, 2013, p. 196). To achieve this goal, document analysis was employed in this study. Document analysis serves as a complementary methodological approach in research and is also used as a technique for collecting data. This technique involves a systematic process of reviewing or evaluating printed or electronic materials (including

those transmitted via computer or the internet) (Bowen, 2009, p. 1; Patton, 2018, p. 4). Descriptive analysis based on deductive technique was employed during the examination of documents (Patton, 2018, p. 453). In this analysis technique, existing patterns, categories, or boundaries are analyzed according to specific frameworks. In this study, documents were examined and analyzed based on themes derived from relevant literature. The document serving as the data source for this research is the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum. Each criterion was assessed based on its inclusion in the curriculum at various grade levels. The program text was not examined in its entirety focused on concepts, which can be considered a limitation of this study.

Table 2: Criteria used for data collection

<i>Critical Citizenship Dimensions</i>	<i>Criteria</i>
Politics/Ideology	Knowledge regarding political concepts, democratic social movements, and rights (Osler and Starkey, 1999; Westheimer and Kahne, 2004)
	Knowledge about inequalities (Andreotti, 2006); dominant discourse (Parker, 1996)
	Sense of the past as a heritage for the future (Cogan and Derricot, 1998)
	Interest in public affairs (Cogan and Derricot, 1998)
Society/Common Understanding	Skills in dialogue (Andreotti, 2006)
	Collaborative efforts for citizenship goals (Cogan and Derricot, 1998)
	Ability to view the world historically/world history (Giroux, 1980)
	Awareness of social issues (Giroux, 1980; Veugelers, 2007)
	Acceptance of basic social values (Cogan and Derricot, 1998)
Praxis (Practice)/Interaction	Collaboration (Veugelers, 2007)
	Individual attitudes and behaviors and their relationship with society (deJaghere and Tudball, 2007)
	Active participation (Kerr, 2000; Giroux, 1980)
Personality/subjectivity	Civic courage (Giroux, 1980)
	Sense of identity (Cogan and Derricot, 1998)
	Independent and critical thinking (Osler and Starkey, 1999; Andreotti, 2006)
	Awareness of the development of individual status (Giroux, 1980)
	Having a forward-looking perspective (Cogan and Derricot, 1998)

In the examined curriculum documents, all content was analyzed according to the criteria listed in Table 2, and it was elucidated how each content element, if included in the program, relates to specific learning outcomes. To enhance the reliability of the findings, an external reviewer was consulted to ensure consistency in correlating the criteria with the identified outcomes (Creswell, 2013, p. 202). The findings were presented and discussed in light of existing literature.

In evaluating the findings of this study, consideration was given to how learning outcomes could be associated with various themes and domains of critical citizenship education. For instance, determining whether a particular learning outcome fosters a future-oriented perspective can sometimes be challenging. For example, in social studies 4th grade, 4th unit, 2nd outcome (SS.4.4.2) “Compares the past and present uses of technological products” the learning outcome focuses on comparing the historical and current uses of technological products. Understanding the differences between past and present uses helps us see how technology has evolved and impacted human life. Analyzing the past and present uses of these technologies enables individuals to understand how these products might develop and be used in the future. Some technological products that initially had limited applications have evolved over time into more complex structures with broader uses, such as mobile phones. Therefore, when

interpreting the study’s findings, this aspect was considered, and connections were drawn between a learning outcome and multiple themes. This aspect can also be viewed as a limitation of the study.

FINDINGS

Findings Regarding the Politics/Ideology Dimension

Within the scope of this study, the results of the document analysis conducted to answer the question “What is the inclusion status of the Politics/Ideology dimension in the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum in terms of critical citizenship dimensions?” are presented in Table 3.

The findings obtained from data analyses should be presented in line with the aims of the study. Tables and figures can be used to display the results of the analyses. Findings section should deal only with presenting the results and should not include the discussion of the findings. Sub-headings in line with sub-goals of the study can be used. Sub-headings should be flush left, in italics and with each word capitalized.

According to Table 3, it is observed that all four criteria included in the critical citizenship political/ideological dimension are present in the 2018 social studies program across different grade levels and attainment numbers.

Table 3. 2018 Social Studies Curriculum according to the critical citizenship approach: Politics/ideology dimension

Dimension	Criteria	Grade Level	Inclusion Status in the Program		Learning Outcomes
			Yes	No	
Politics/Ideology	Knowledge regarding political concepts, democratic social movements, and rights	4th grade	x		SS.4.6.1; SS.5.1.4;
		5th grade	x		SS.5.6.3; SS.6.1.5;
		6th grade	x		SS.6.6.1; SS.6.6.2;
		7th grade	x		SS.6.6.3; SS.6.6.4;
	Knowledge about inequalities; dominant discourse	4th grade		x	SS.6.6.5; SS.7.1.4;
		5th grade		x	SS.7.6.1; SS.7.6.2;
		6th grade	x		SS.7.6.4
		7th grade		x	SS.6.6.6
	Sense of the past as a heritage for the future	4th grade	x		SS.4.2.1; SS.4.2.3;
		5th grade	x		SS.5.2.1; SS.5.2.2;
		6th grade	x		SS.5.2.5; SS.6.1.2;
		7th grade	x		SS.6.2.1; SS.7.2.5
	Interest in public affairs	4th grade		x	SS.6.1.4
		5th grade		x	
		6th grade	x		
		7th grade		x	

However, it would not be accurate to generalize the findings for all criteria because the first criterion, “knowledge regarding political concepts, democratic social movements, and rights” inherently encompasses multiple criteria. Specifically, there is no specific attainment statement related to democratic social movements, with the curriculum focusing generally on citizenship rights and political concepts across all grade levels. Similarly, the criterion “sense of the past as a heritage for the future” is associated with at least one attainment at all grade levels.

Concerning the dimension, the criteria “knowledge about inequalities; dominant discourse” and “interest in public affairs” are not explicitly addressed in any program but are indirectly referenced only at the 6th-grade level. For instance, in SB.6.6.6, the statement “recognizes the value

given to women in social life based on examples from Turkish history and current events” implies a recognition of societal inequalities and reinforces the dominant discourse regarding women in Turkish society. The limited but consistent reflection of the political/ideological dimension across all programs can be considered a positive attribute from the perspective of critical citizenship education.

Findings on the Dimension of Society/ Common Understanding

The findings obtained from the document analysis conducted to address the question “What is the extent to which the dimension of society/common understanding is included among the critical citizenship dimensions in the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum?” are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. The 2018 Social Studies Curriculum according to the dimension of society/common understanding in the critical citizenship approach

Dimension	Criteria	Grade Level	Inclusion Status in the Program		Learning Outcomes
			Yes	No	
Society/Common Understanding	Skills in dialogue	4th grade	x		SS.4.1.4; SS.4.6.1; SS.4.7.4; SS.5.1.3; SS.6.1.3; SS.7.1.1; SS.7.1.2
		5th grade	x		
		6th grade	x		
		7th grade	x		
	Collaborative efforts for citizenship goals	4th grade	x		SS.4.1.3; SS.5.1.3
		5th grade	x		
		6th grade		x	
		7th grade		x	
	Ability to view the world historically/ world history	4th grade		x	SS.6.2.2; SS.6.2.5; SS.7.2.3; SS.7.4.2; SS.7.4.3; SS.7.5.1; SS.7.5.2
		5th grade		x	
		6th grade	x		
		7th grade	x		
	Awareness of social issues	4th grade	x		SS.4.4.5; SS.4.6.3; SS.4.4.2; SS.5.1.4; SS.5.6.1; SS.5.7.4; SS.6.1.4; SS.6.2.5; SS.6.6.6; SS.6.6.4; SS.7.7.4
		5th grade	x		
		6th grade	x		
		7th grade	x		
	Acceptance of basic social values	4th grade		x	SS.5.6.4; SS.6.1.2
		5th grade	x		
		6th grade	x		
		7th grade		x	
	Collaboration	4th grade		x	SS.5.1.3; SS.5.5.5; SS.6.1.4; SS.7.7.4
		5th grade	x		
		6th grade	x		
		7th grade	x		

As presented in Table 4, the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum represents the dimension of society/common understanding within the critical citizenship approach through the criteria of “dialogue skills” and “awareness of social issues” with varying numbers of learning outcomes at each grade level. On the other hand, the criterion of “collaborative efforts for citizenship goals” is represented by one learning outcome in the lower grades but is not represented by any outcomes in the 6th and 7th grades. The criterion of “ability to view the world historically/world history” is not included in the lower grades but is more strongly emphasized in the upper grades, particularly in the 7th grade. The criterion of “collaboration” is not associated with any learning outcomes at the 4th grade level, and the criterion of “acceptance of basic social values” is not associated with any learning outcomes at both the 4th and 7th grade levels. Overall, it can be stated that the dimension of society/common understanding is sufficiently represented in the 2018 curriculum.

Findings on the Dimension of Praxis

The findings obtained from the document analysis conducted to address the question “What is the extent to which the dimension of praxis is included among the critical citizenship dimensions in the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum?” are presented in Table 5.

According to Table 5, the critical citizenship dimension of praxis in the 2018 curriculum, which includes three criteria, appears to be strong in terms of the criterion “individual attitudes and behaviors and their relationship with society.” This criterion is associated with at least one learning outcome

at all grade levels. Another criterion, “active participation,” is represented by one learning outcome in the lower grades, but it is not associated with any learning outcomes at the 7th grade level, which is the final grade in which social studies is taught. The criterion of “civic courage” within the praxis dimension is associated with only one learning outcome and only at the 6th grade level. As clearly shown in Table 5, it can be said that the 2018 curriculum remains quite theoretical regarding the two most important criteria of the praxis dimension: active participation and civic courage. However, it is expected that in the upper grades, students would acquire theoretical knowledge related to the content and develop more practice-oriented learning behaviors.

Findings on the Dimension of Personality/Subjectivity

The findings obtained from the document analysis conducted to address the question “What is the extent to which the dimension of personality/subjectivity is included among the critical citizenship dimensions in the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum?” are presented in Table 6.

As seen in Table 6, the criteria “sense of identity” and “having a forward-looking perspective” are associated with at least one learning outcome at all grade levels. The criterion “awareness of the development of individual status” is associated with one learning outcome in the 6th and 7th grades, while the criterion “independent and critical thinking” is associated with at least one learning outcome in all grades except the 4th grade. Overall, it can be stated that the dimension of personality/subjectivity within the critical

Table 5: The 2018 Social Studies Curriculum according to the dimension of praxis in the critical citizenship approach

Dimension	Criteria	Grade Level	Inclusion Status in the Program		Learning Outcomes
			Yes	No	
Praxis (Practice)/ Interaction	Individual attitudes and behaviors and their relationship with society	4th grade	x		SS.4.4.5; SS.4.6.2; SS.5.4.1; SS.6.1.3; SS.6.1.4; SS.7.1.2
		5th grade	x		
		6th grade	x		
		7th grade	x		
	Active participation	4th grade	x		SS.5.1.3; SS.5.5.5; SS.6.1.4
		5th grade	x		
		6th grade	x		
		7th grade		x	
	Civic courage	4th grade		x	SS.6.1.5
		5th grade		x	
		6th grade	x		
		7th grade		x	

Table 6. The 2018 Social Studies Curriculum according to the dimension of personality/subjectivity in the critical citizenship approach

Dimension	Criteria	Grade Level	Inclusion Status in the Program		Learning Outcomes
			Yes	No	
Personality/subjectivity	Sense of identity	4th grade	x		SS.4.1.1; SS.4.2.2;
		5th grade	x		SS.4.7.3; SS.5.2.4;
		6th grade	x		SS.5.6.4; SS.6.1.2;
		7th grade	x		SS.6.6.5; SS.7.2.5
	Independent and critical thinking	4th grade		x	SS.5.3.4; SS.5.4.2
		5th grade	x		SS.5.6.3; SS.6.4.3;
		6th grade	x		SS.7.1.1; SS.7.4.4
		7th grade	x		
	Awareness of the development of individual status	4th grade		x	SS.6.5.6; SS.7.5.5
		5th grade		x	
		6th grade	x		
		7th grade	x		
	Having a forward-looking perspective	4th grade	x		SS.4.4.2; SS.4.4.3;
		5th grade	x		SS.5.2.5; SS.5.4.1;
		6th grade	x		SS.6.4.2; SS.6.7.4;
		7th grade	x		SS.7.1.3

citizenship approach is sufficiently represented in the 2018 curriculum.

DISCUSSION

Political education is a crucial component of citizenship education (Kuş & Tarhan, 2016). It is of particular importance for Turkey, which has a large youth population (Gürel & Demir, 2022), to maintain the political interest of young people and to enhance their awareness of political issues. Previous studies have demonstrated that the Social Studies curriculum lacks any content pertaining to the dimension of politics/ideology within the context of critical citizenship and democratic movements, a deficiency that has been the subject of criticism (Gürel, 2022; Gürel & Demir, 2022). However, democratic citizenship education should extend beyond the mere imparting of knowledge regarding rights, responsibilities, elections, governance, and institutions. It should also facilitate an understanding among children that social movements represent a means of seeking democratic rights. In this context, the 1998 Crick Report highlights the significance of concepts such as representation, participation, and legitimacy in citizenship education, emphasising the necessity of discussing tangible issues within the educational environment (Crick, 1998). Furthermore, during periods of political unrest, polarisation, and democratic challenges

in society, citizenship education is regarded as a means of identifying solutions (Van Dyk, 2022). From this perspective, where citizenship education is viewed as a tool for facilitating political practice through education, it is possible to equip children with the knowledge and values they need to identify and solve real problems (Biesta & Lawy, 2006). Given that one of the skills assessed in the Social Studies course is “political literacy”, it is evident that the content in this area should be more comprehensive.

One of the findings is that the sub-dimension of knowledge about inequalities in the policy/ideology dimension is not adequately reflected in the programmes. Similarly, a previous study conducted by Gürel and Avcı (2023) revealed that the social studies programme lacked a robust discourse on gender equality, women’s rights, feminism, ethnicity, multiculturalism, and political rights. This situation can also be viewed as an illustration of the prevailing discourse within the programmes. With regard to the notion that the past is subsumed by the future, it can be asserted that the programme is aligned with the fundamental objectives of Turkish national and social studies education. In his 2000 work, Davis defines education as a political endeavour to transfer the knowledge, beliefs, and values of society. In this context, it can be argued that social studies is one of the most important courses at the primary education level, as it plays a pivotal role in the transfer of culture (Gürel & Çetin, 2017;

Deveci, 2009; Henry, 1963). It can be stated that the fact that achievements are observed at every programme level supports this conclusion. Furthermore, the programme appears to lack a dimension that encourages students to become interested in public affairs. One of the most crucial aspects of democracy is to ensure that citizens are somehow engaged with public affairs and can exert control over them (Beetham, 2006). The effective realisation of this in society is only possible through an effective education, which should commence at the earliest possible stage. For this reason, it is considered important to include objectives or achievements that will enable students to be more interested in public affairs in the programmes.

Dialogue skills are defined as the absence of any impediments to communication between individuals in society. The capacity to accept the characteristics of different individuals or groups in society without any form of prejudice is a crucial aspect of this dialogue. The shared citizenship and moral bonds among individuals in society facilitate interaction between individuals in their daily lives (Williams, Hinge & Persson, 2008). The individual and society learning area and global connections learning area in the social studies curriculum facilitate the establishment of the relationship between the self, the collective and other individuals. The provision of students with the capacity for self-evaluation and critical understanding through dialogues in learning environments will facilitate their ability to navigate the increasing challenges of the 21st century (Sharma, 2011). It can therefore be argued that the inclusion of dialogue skills as an outcome in the social studies curriculum at all grade levels represents a significant strength. Furthermore, the development of students' dialogue skills is also related to their gaining more awareness of social issues. Social awareness can be defined as the ability to understand and respond to the needs, feelings, and concerns of others (Shrivastava, 2016). It may be reasonably assumed that students who possess these qualities will be more sensitive to the events occurring in their immediate environment and will be more likely to take action. Furthermore, this situation encourages students to act in a cooperative manner. One of the fundamental tenets of critical pedagogy is the understanding that "we are part of the problems and solutions we experience" (Andreotti, 2006). In this context, it can be stated that the sub-criteria of the society/common understanding dimension are closely related. The acquisition of skills such as cooperation, communication and social participation, which are fundamental to the social studies curriculum, also demonstrate that the programme provides an appropriate foundation for the society/common understanding dimension. In particular, it is seen that within the scope of the criterion of working together for the purposes related to citizenship, it is tried to raise awareness on this

issue with one outcome at lower grade levels. In this context, apart from the acquisitions, a connection with this criterion can be indirectly established with the statement "*They learn the ways of participating in social services and various official activities and comprehend which democratic ways are available to influence the administration.*" in the learning area of active citizenship in the curriculum.

The development of an individual's self-awareness and personality is influenced by their upbringing within the family and wider civil society. The family is one of the fundamental conditions for social reproduction (Charvet, 2009, p. 173). The acquisition of societal values commences with the individual's upbringing within the family unit. Consequently, it is of paramount importance that curricula contain content that will reinforce these values. It is recommended that citizenship education provide students with social values, skills and understanding, as well as knowledge of civil society and citizenship (Crick, 1998). The acquisition of basic social values by individuals in different ways within society can create obstacles for both individuals and groups that make up society to understand each other, due to a lack of a common understanding (Williams, Hinge & Persson, 2008). This situation necessitates the incorporation of social and cultural values into educational programmes. It is assumed that the social studies programme is sufficient in terms of the acquisitions it contains in this regard. However, it is also evident that the social studies programme does not include sufficient learning outcomes on world history at all grade levels. It can be considered a natural consequence that world history is not mentioned in the lower grade levels due to the principle of near and far, which is one of the basic principles of teaching, and the period in which the students are in.

There is a robust correlation between the attitudes and behaviours exhibited by individuals and the broader social context (Jarvis, 2012). In today's world, individuals are inundated with images and commodities that effectively represent their lives, leading to a perception of reality that is indirect and mediated (Plant, 1992, p. 10). This illustrates the significant influence that society exerts on the formation of the individual. Furthermore, education plays a pivotal role in this process of individual formation. It is therefore imperative that in educational environments, individuals are confronted with the social realities in which they live. Schools must become places where social life is reflected directly, and individuals must not be deprived of the forms of knowledge they bring to school. In critical pedagogy, every human being is in the process of "becoming" due to problem-defining education. This process of becoming is expected to be realised in accordance with social reality. While the social studies curriculum encompasses achievements at nearly every grade

level with the objective of fostering attitudes and behaviors aligned with prevailing social values, this should not be based solely on the immediate transfer of existing values. Instead, they should be reconstructed in a continuous process, adapting to the ever-changing needs of the individual and society.

It can be stated that the criteria of active participation and civic courage, which are included in the praxis dimension of critical citizenship education, are complementary to each other. However, it is thought-provoking that while there is a stronger emphasis on active participation in the programme, there is almost no mention of civic courage. Social rights and political participation are of great importance for understanding the various needs of different groups in society (Weller, 2007, p. 40). In democratic systems, pressure and interest groups facilitate the fulfilment of these needs by enabling individuals to collectively advocate for their rights and interests. These groups are among the most crucial elements of democratic participation and the advancement of new rights (Boehmke, 2002; Maloney, 2009). Nevertheless, studies indicate that a considerable proportion of young people in Turkey do not engage in any democratic demonstrations or boycotts (Dağ & Koçer, 2019). Similarly, the perception that trade unions are incapable of safeguarding workers' rights (Urhan & Selamoğlu, 2008) may also dissuade workers, the largest demographic group in society, from voicing their concerns more forcefully. From this perspective, the implementation of curricula that will fortify civil courage within society and encourage individual engagement in problem-solving will simultaneously advance democratic processes and reinforce the practical dimension of the programmes. Prior research has underscored that a more palatable approach to active citizenship within the curriculum will foster greater student interest in state and social issues (Şen, 2019).

School is a social institution that affects the development of self and identity concepts of children (Kaplan, 1990, p. 187). Social studies teaching plays a significant role in this context, contributing to the school's identity and self-development task. One of the main objectives of the social studies curriculum is to foster individuals who have adopted national values. It is therefore evident that the curriculum encompasses a range of subject content and acquisitions that facilitate the development of identity across all grade levels. This study has demonstrated that the curriculum is inclusive of all grade levels, which supports the assertion that the sense of identity, a sub-criterion of the personality/subjectivity dimension of the critical citizenship approach, is a prominent feature of the curriculum. The criterion of independent and critical thinking was associated with at least one outcome at every grade level except 4th grade. Critical

thinking is a fundamental skill in social studies education. The development of understanding in social studies is based on this skill, which encompasses attitudes such as critical knowledge, social criticism, imagination, interpretation, reasoning, anti-oppression, marginalisation and silencing (Ross, 2013). It is therefore evident that critical thinking within the context of social studies should not be confined to the subject content alone but should encompass the capacity to critically examine a range of events, situations and ideas. It is also important to recognise that teaching social studies in a manner that fosters critical thinking skills can positively contribute to students' academic achievement (Akbiyık & Seferoğlu, 2006).

The process of social change is a crucial element in the development of critical citizenship. In this context, an individual's awareness of their own status can act as a catalyst for social transformation. This awareness can mobilise individuals against the injustices that surround them, thereby contributing to the improvement of society. With this awareness, individuals become more active and conscious members of democratic society. Concurrently, this awareness nourishes the individual's self-esteem and empathy, as well as fostering an understanding that other people have similar rights. Those who defend their own rights can demonstrate courage in defending the rights of others, thereby becoming effective agents of social justice. It is essential that social studies education addresses individual awareness not only in the context of professions but also by associating it with the transformation of oppressive, unjust and undemocratic social conditions and relations (Ross, 2013). The social studies curriculum's approach to developing individual status awareness, especially at the upper grade levels, has been the subject of criticism on the grounds that it is limited in scope. It is argued that this awareness should be fostered at all grade levels and that it should form a key focus of the curriculum, aligning with the principles of critical pedagogy. However, it should be noted that the curriculum's strong emphasis on the concept of the state may present a challenge for students in developing a nuanced understanding of their own subjectivity (Şen, 2019).

One of the most important tools for ensuring that students have a future-oriented outlook is critical citizenship education. This education enables students to understand systems, acquire critical thinking skills, plan their future and actively practice citizenship. In this way, students can become more conscious, effective and responsible individuals in the future. It is evident that this purpose directly overlaps with the aim of raising active and responsible citizens, which is the main purpose of social studies education. The findings indicate that achievements are included in all grade levels in

accordance with this purpose. It can therefore be concluded that the social studies curriculum provides students with a future perspective. It is postulated that pedagogical activities such as analysing contemporary systems or issues, fostering environments conducive to critical thinking, guiding students to formulate future objectives, and practices based on active citizenship within the scope of social studies courses will assist students in developing a more robust perspective on the future.

CONCLUSION

This study, which examines the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum from a critical citizenship perspective, reveals that while many topics fall within the purview of critical citizenship, they are incorporated into the curriculum solely from a conceptual standpoint. Consequently, a considerable portion of the curriculum's achievements remain at the knowledge level. While the curriculum includes concepts related to politics and political rights, it lacks concrete examples and practice-based information about democratic social movements, their applications, and potential solutions to the inequalities experienced in society. Additionally, it does not address how dominant discourses influence political and social life. While the curriculum includes examples of successful efforts to raise awareness about fundamental rights, it lacks examples of how these rights are obtained, what challenges are faced in the absence of these rights, and the role of organised struggle in the protection of these rights. While active participation is mentioned throughout the programme, this participation is dealt with only in the context of ensuring the continuation of the existing order and on the axis of cooperation. In this respect, the programme lacks the content that would require civic courage and active participation to ensure social change or transformation. In this respect, it can be stated that the praxis dimension of the programme is quite weak. Similarly, although the sense of identity is emphasised as much as possible in the programme, the free self-existence of the individual is neglected. The programme emphasises the construction of a culture, state and society-centred identity based on the acceptance of basic social values. It adopts an understanding of identity that strengthens autochthonous beliefs and neglects differences. These results are similar to those of previous studies (Şen, 2019; Gürel, 2022; Gürel & Demir, 2022). In general, it can be stated that the 2018 Social Studies Programme fulfils the majority of the requirements for citizenship education. However, it is insufficient to raise the citizen profile with a critical citizenship approach.

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