



OPINIONS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ON THE HISTORY SUBJECTS IN THE 4TH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the opinions of primary school teachers regarding the history subjects found in the primary school 4th grade coursework in scope of the year 2018 Social Studies Course Curriculum. The study utilized survey technique in a qualitative research paradigm. Data were gathered through interviews and document analysis technique. The study group for the study comprised of 20 teachers working in Ankara and İzmir who participated in the study on voluntary basis. The descriptive analysis method was used for analysis of the data, and data presentation was based on frequencies and percentages. Results showed that 1) the history subjects in the Social Studies curriculum are insufficient in relevance to purposes of the course and in regard of achievement of gains, 2) the subjects fail to endear history courses to the student and 3) the time allotted for history subjects in the curriculum is insufficient. It was concluded that the methods and techniques recommended for history teaching are insufficient, that teachers face significant difficulties in teaching history subjects, that the subjects are not qualified to create an awareness of history in students, and that while the history subjects defined under curriculum gains are congruent with the values, qualifications and basic abilities defined in the curriculum, the coherence between the subjects and targeted gains should be improved. In regard of improvement of history lessons the teachers recommend use of visuals, organization of research and study trips to historic locations, objectification of abstract contents to render them more compatible for the level of children, to include less gains and more activities, and to provide teachers with seminars regarding history teaching and teaching methods.

Keywords: Primary school history teaching, social studies teaching, primary school curriculum, teacher opinions

INTRODUCTION

Children meet planned and scheduled history teaching at primary school level for the first time. The children begin to perceive the feeling and idea of a history standing behind all the rules, attitudes and behaviors of their family, the people they live among and their physical and social near circle for the first time in this period of their lives. The images of pharaohs, sultans, emperors and empresses and the history charts looking down on them from the walls of the corridors and classrooms of their schools, the adages, poems and songs they hear, the fairy tales and stories they listen to, the films and animations they watch, the monuments and historic buildings adorning the playgrounds, parks and streets they play in and the stories told about these awaken feelings, ideas and impressions on history in children, just like they do in adults. Resembling a blank slate, as John Locke (1632-1704) puts it, memories of children form their first impressions of history through activities in their daily lives and the images they experience through these activities. This allows children to develop a feeling of history through the medium of their social and physical environment.

On the other hand, another determining factor affecting history education is the intellectual and cognitive development level of children. There is a direct relation between the intellectual and cognitive development levels of children and their manner and level of interpretation and understanding of their world and the objects and events therein. Therefore, curriculums prepared for education of children must be congruent with intellectual and cognitive development of children as well as their interests and abilities. However, the speed and impact of scientific and technologic developments also have a dizzying impact on intellectual and cognitive development of children and develop their interests and abilities to a similar extent. Accordingly, children experience a more effective, faster and more comprehensive transformation in their cognition and comprehension of their society and their world in comparison to adults. Chief among the reasons of this state of affairs is the fact that the children have not yet achieved a level of activity in regard of prejudices and presumptions



bearing the load of history leading to subjective interpretations in their conception of history. Therefore, the view of each generation regarding society, world and life tangibly and appreciably differentiates from the past, leading to changes and transformations in their cognition of history and their social abilities. All these factors makes it essential to review and reorganise the structure, the content and the teaching methods of the Social Studies courses aiming to prepare the children for social life, as well as the history subjects like those in scope of this coursework.

In the last twenty-five years the speed of developments in information and communication technologies and the changes caused by these developments on the education and learning approaches have necessitated both review of classical learning theories of the past and reorganisation of curriculums in accord with learning capacities of new generations and their personal and social requirements. All these factors necessitate frequent review of education programs and course contents of Turkish schools in various phases of education from preschool to doctorate degree level. Reorganisations conducted in this direction have been subject to many studies and reviews including assessments from stakeholders in their fields regarding their positive and negative aspects. While history education in secondary level education in Turkey has been subject to many and varied studies (Aktekin & Ceylan, 2012; Turan, 2015; Arseven, Dervişoğlu & Uludağ, 2015; Berberoğlu & Berberoğlu, 2015; Şimşek, 2016; Kaya & Perihan, 2017; Belenli & Avaroğulları, 2017; Özdemir, 2017; Şimşek & Alaslan, 2017; Turan, 2018; Yıldırım, 2018; Turan, 2015, Turan, 2018; Akbaba, 2019) it is seen that the primary school stage in history education is generally a neglected field.

Due to the fact that primary school level Social Studies courses more heavily focus on citizenship knowledge and social abilities, the history education in scope of this curriculum is pushed into a very limited frame. The goals and targets defined for the Social Studies courses and the gains ascribed to these have also determined the limits of subjects discussed in history lessons. This circumstance leads studies and research on the Social Studies courses to focus on the general outlines of the course and the citizenship knowledge sections in particular, thus leading to neglect of aspects like structure, content, problems, etc. of history teaching at primary school level. Nevertheless, just recommending some theoretical and practical examples from the literature would be insufficient to ensure an effective history education by providing history curriculums, textbooks and education methods which will instil an awareness of history up to the goals and targets of primary school history courses constituting the first stage of history education and the need of the age of the students. There is a need to re-evaluate history education on all aspects, also referring to experiences and assessments of the students and the teachers. Such a re-evaluation has become essential to ensure a history education fulfilling to the extent of problems, expectations, demands, interests and abilities of students and teachers as two stakeholders receiving and providing education in scope of the curriculum. The children cannot be expected to form healthy individual and social frames of reference, viewpoints, and problem-solving and life skills for their future lives while also insisting on a social and historic understanding disregarding modern conditions and values of the world and the society they live in. The teachers' experiences and observations regarding teaching of curriculum content and the problems faced by the students and by the teachers themselves provide important contributions to development of history education. However, a history teaching approach determined by specialists and academicians unaware of classroom practices in history education and disregarding the expectations of students, the problems faced by teachers during teaching practice, and their observations and experiences on learning styles of the students, cannot provide a history education suitable for the requirements of the age.

Due to all these reasons, in this study it is deemed necessary to refer to opinions of teachers regarding teaching of history subjects in the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum currently implemented in Turkish primary schools with an education period of four years.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the opinions of primary school teachers regarding history subjects taught in scope of the 2018 Primary School Social Studies Curriculum which is currently in force. While there are previous studies reflecting opinions of teacher on various aspects of the new



curriculum in force (Er & Bayındır, 2015; Çatak, 2015; Ersoy, 2016; Kısa & Gazel, 2016; Avcı, İbret & Avcı, 2017; Aydemir, 2017; Dolmaz & Kılıç, 2017; Avcı & Faiz, 2018; Görmez, 2018) no study regarding history subjects was found in the literature. The only study regarding history education in scope of Social Studies course (Ulusoy, Erkuş, 2015) is in regard of the previous curriculum, and no study discussing the new curriculum implemented as of 2018 was found in the literature. This study aims to fill this gap. This study aims to determine the deficiencies in primary school history education and problems experienced in its practice in order to help develop better qualified curriculums and to light the way for further studies on primary school history education.

Study Questions

In scope of the study purpose, primary school teachers were asked to answer the following questions regarding efficacy of the history subjects found in scope of the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum: What are the opinions of primary school teachers on history subjects in 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum regarding;

- 1- Suitability of the history subjects to purposes of the Social Studies course;
- 2- The level of achievement of the stated gains;
- 3- Whether the contents of history subjects in curriculum are able to endear history subjects to children at primary school level;
- 4- Whether the time allotted for the curriculum gains is sufficient;
- 5- Suitability of the methods and techniques recommended in the curriculum;
- 6- Problems experienced in teaching of these subjects;
- 7- Efficacy of these subjects in instilling an awareness of history in the students;
- 8- Level of correlation between the values, qualifications and basic abilities defined under the curriculum and the history subjects defined under the curriculum gains; and
- 9- What are their recommendations for effective history teaching at primary school level?

METHOD

The study is conducted based on the case study approach, a qualitative research method. “Case study method is used to determine the conditions of an event or fact faced in real life (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). Case study is a method frequently employed for deep examination of multiple events, environments, programs, social groups or other interlinked systems” (Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, Demirel, 2008: 257). Again, as pointed out by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008), qualitative research methods allows one to view the facts from individual viewpoints and to illustrate the social structure and processes creating these viewpoints (Örücü and Şimşek, 2011: 176). This study aims to have primary school teachers evaluate the condition of the history subjects in scope of the Social Studies course.

Study Group

The study group in this study is comprised of 20 primary school teachers working in city centres of İzmir and Ankara. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008) maximum diversity can be achieved with relatively small sample groups and maximising the level at which the individual diversity of stakeholders in the subject problem is reflected by the gathered data.

13 of the teachers participating in the study are women, while 7 are men. The graduate degrees of the teachers comprise 11 from Primary Class Teaching programs, 2 from Biology programs, 1 from a Teaching Academy, 1 from a Education Institute, 1 from a Turkish Language program, 1 from a Public Administration program, 1 from a Physics program, and 2 from Teaching Major Departments. In addition, professional experience of the teachers range from 1 to 10 years for 2 teachers, 11 to 20



years for 4 teachers, 21 to 30 years for 8 teachers and 30+ years for 6 teachers. 5 of the teachers hold master's degrees, while 2 hold doctorate degrees. Master's degrees of the teachers comprise 2 in Education Management, 2 in Curriculum and Instruction, 1 in Public Administration and 1 in Oceanography, while the Doctorate degrees of the teachers comprise Science Teaching program and Curriculum and Instruction. Among the 20 teachers 5 have participated in more than 10 on-the-job training programs, 10 have participated in more than 5 and 3 have participated in less than 5, while 2 have not participated in any on-the-job training. All teachers work at public primary schools in city centre counties of İzmir and Ankara. Classes taught by the participating teachers comprise of 20-25 students for 3 teachers, 26-30 students for 6 teachers, 31-35 students for 9 teachers, and 35-40 students for 2 teachers. In the period when the study was conducted 5 of the teachers were teaching 1st grade, 1 was teaching 2nd grade, 6 were teaching 3rd grade and 8 were teaching 4th grade.

Data Collection

"Structured interview form", a qualitative data collection method, was employed in the study. A structured interview form comprised of open-ended questions intended to assess the opinions of primary school teachers regarding history subjects in scope of the Social Studies Curriculum. First a comprehensive literature screening was conducted in the field and 6 general themes were determined to prepare the teacher interview form, and a semi-structured interview form of 10 items with sub-questions was generated as a data collection tool. The draft interview form was created also by referring to opinions of three specialists in the field. Then, after a pilot run including interviews with four teachers the interview form was brought to its final form and made ready for use. This pilot run was conducted with 4 teachers who are not included in the study group. The interview form shaped after this pilot run is comprised of two sections, including information on demographic characteristics of the participants in the 1st section, while the 2nd Section includes questions aimed to determine opinions of teachers regarding teaching of history subjects in scope of the primary school 4th grade Social Studies Curriculum. Teacher interview forms were conveyed on the basis of voluntary participation for data collection. The feedback obtained from the returned forms constitutes the primary data source for the study.

Data Analysis

The collected data is analysed by descriptive analysis method. In descriptive analysis approach the gathered data is processed by being classified under predetermined themes or categories. In order to reflect the viewpoints of interviewed people in a salient manner, the gathered data are described in a clear and systematic fashion and results are sought by examining the causal relations between these by explaining and interpreting these descriptions (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008: 224). Themes are determined in light of conceptual frameworks, interview questions and sub-questions based on field literature. The data collected with the forms were first carefully read and analysed, and the main ideas emerging from each question were summarised. Repeated expressions were tabulated by noting the participants and frequency of the repeated expressions, and the most emphasised ideas were determined as the main categories of data analysis. Gains, content, learning-teaching processes and measurement-evaluation elements of the "Social Studies Curriculum" as well as the recommendations of the teachers were taken into consideration in this scope and were summarised and interpreted under these main themes. In presentation of the findings names of the teachers were anonymised by using code numbers. For example, Ö.1 refers to teacher coded with the number 1. Open-ended questions were used to ensure "credibility" of the study, thus aiming to obtain data focused on depth. In addition, the study structure was submitted to review of specialists, referring to opinions of people specialised in qualitative study methods in regard of analysis and interpretation of the interview forms. Detailed description approach was chosen to ensure transmissibility of the study.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study are examined under nine headings, comprised of the opinions of the teachers regarding "1- Suitability of the history subjects to purposes of the Social Studies course; 2- The level



of achievement of the stated gains; 3- Whether the contents of history subjects in curriculum are able to endear history subjects to children at primary school level; 4- Whether the time allotted for the curriculum gains is sufficient; 5- Suitability of the methods and techniques recommended in the curriculum; 6- Problems experienced in teaching of these subjects; 7- Efficacy of these subjects in instilling an awareness of history in the students; 8- The relationships among the values, qualifications and basic abilities defined under the curriculum and the history subjects defined under the curriculum gains; and 9- What are their recommendations for effective history teaching at primary school level?" In conclusion of evaluation and interpretation of the data collected from interviews conducted with participating class teachers regarding the history subjects in the primary school 4th grade Social Studies Curriculum in accord with the themes determined in scope of descriptive analysis process, the following findings were derived:

Opinions of the Participants regarding Suitability of the History Subjects to Purposes of the Social Studies Course

The teachers were asked "What are your opinions regarding suitability of the history subjects in Social Studies Curriculum to the purposes of the Social Studies course?" Answers given by the teachers are shown on the Table 1.

Table 1. Opinions of the participants regarding suitability of the history subjects in social studies curriculum to purposes of the social studies course

Opinions	f	%
Suitable	3	15
Suitable, but not sufficient	6	30
Not suitable	8	40
No opinion	3	15

15% of the participants express the history subjects in the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum are suitable for purposes of the Social Studies course, while 40% express they are suitable but not sufficient, 30% of participants express these subjects are not suitable for the purposes, while 15% state they have no thought on this matter.

Thoughts of the teachers who opine the history subjects in the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum are suitable for the purposes of Social Studies course (Ö1-Ö2-Ö14) can be outlined in general as follows: two teachers pointing out positive aspects have also expressed the program also contains negative points, stating "*The subjects are suitable for the stated gains since 4th Grade curriculum covers family history, national cultural elements, children's games from past to today and heroes of national was of independence*" (Ö14). "*Short and understandable, suitable for purposes of the social studied course*" (Ö1).

Thoughts of the teachers who opine the history subjects in the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum are suitable for the purposes of Social Studies course but are not sufficient (Ö6-Ö9-Ö13-Ö16-Ö17-Ö19) meet at the point that "*Historic events are presented at the cognitive level in accord with the stated gains in scope of the course. History subjects fulfil the knowledge gain of the course, but cannot be fully completed in the allotted class hours and causes difficulties due to being full of details exceeding the level of the students*" (Ö6-Ö9). Other opinions include, "*The spiral and interlinked structure of the course is positive. However, the National War of Independence subjects which require rote learning should be reviewed*" (Ö16). "*Suitable for purposes other than having a little too much detail*" (Ö13). "*The subjects in the curriculum meet the stated gains up to a level on the points of conformity with one's person and environment in regard of personal characteristics, knowing one's self, recognising individual differences, understanding values of one's society and understanding Atatürk's principles. However, in the context of general purposes of Social Studies course, sufficient learning cannot be achieved on intangible elements which are not tangibly utilised in daily life, like homeland, flag and independence. On the other hand, handling of national and universal values also includes internal contradictions and discrepancies*" (Ö17).



However, another important point in the studies is the fact that the teachers who opine the history subjects in the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum are not suitable for the purposes of Social Studies course have expressed their thoughts in a more detailed and precise language. Thoughts of the participants who express negative opinion on the matter focus on the following points. "History subjects are not suitable for the purposes of the curriculum and the level of the students and are insufficient and boring" (Ö11). "The subjects have been handled in too many particulars and too much detail for the characteristics of the target age group. The subjects remain intangible in the minds of the students. They end up quickly forgetting what they learned. Students prefer to learn by rote since the subjects remain intangible for them" (Ö8). "The history subjects are insufficient. The students graduate with knowledge levels way below that of general culture" (Ö18). "There are unnecessarily long narrations which bore the students" (Ö3). "The number of subjects is too high, and the content is hollow" (Ö15). "The national war of independence subjects which require rote learning should be reviewed. I think the purposes remain too theoretical, the knowledge transfer gets stuck at the receiving stage, failing to induce heroisation and assimilation of knowledge" (Ö7). "Distance education fails to teach subjects in an effective and productive manner" (Ö16). When opinions the teachers participating in the study regarding Suitability of the History Subjects in the Socials Studies Curriculum to the Purposes of the Social Studies Course are taken as a whole, it can be said a large majority holds a negative opinion, reaching up to 70% when those who find the subject partially suitable but still insufficient were added

Opinions of the Participants regarding the Level of Achievement of the Stated Gains

The teachers were asked "What are your opinions regarding the level of achievement of the stated gains by the history subjects in the curriculum?" Answers given by the teachers are shown on the Table 2.

Table 2. Opinions of the participants regarding the level of achievement of the stated gains by the history subjects

Opinion	f	%
Subjects can achieve the gains	8	40
Subjects can partially achieve the gains	3	15
Subjects cannot achieve the gains	8	40
No opinion	1	05

While 40% of the teachers participating in the study express that the history subjects in the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum has the capability to achieve the stated gains, %40 opines these subjects are insufficient and 10% stated they find the subjects only partially suitable.

The teachers who think the history subjects in the curriculum can achieve the stated gains (Ö1-Ö2-Ö3-Ö6-Ö9-Ö10-Ö12-Ö16) have confined themselves to state their positive opinion with few words, without going into detail; "Stated gains can be achieved" (Ö1). "I think they achieve the stated gains" (Ö12). "I find the relationship between the gains and the content to be generally positive" (Ö16). "At achievable level" (Ö10).

The teachers who think the history subjects in the curriculum can partially achieve the stated gains (Ö5-Ö11-Ö13) have also not provided any details regarding their judgement of partial achievement, stating, "partially achieve" (Ö5), "Intermediate" (Ö11) and "Some are suitable, some are not" (Ö13).

The teachers who posit that the history subjects in the curriculum are insufficient to achieve the stated gains (Ö4-Ö8-Ö14-Ö15-Ö17-Ö18-Ö19-Ö20) express their views as follows. "The subjects have been handled in too many particulars and too much detail for the characteristics of the target age group. The subjects remain intangible in the minds of the students. They end up quickly forgetting what they learned" (Ö8). "Learning cannot take place because the time allotted for the classes is too short and the subjects are too many in number" (Ö4). "Subjects on Atatürk's principles remain too intangible in regard learning principles since they are not handled with more tangible, modern comparisons from daily life. Again, subject on personal rights and responsibilities do not correspond to what students



face in real life and thus cause contradictions. Stated gains regarding the National War of Independence and Founding of the Republic are handled in a very tangible manner, but the contradictions particularly between gains regarding republic and the practices the students face in daily life cause these subjects to become insufficient in achieving the general purposes of Social Studies teaching" (Ö17). "History subjects should be structured from near-to-far in a manner helping the children to recognize and understand their own time" (Ö15). "Since primary school students are at the concrete operations stage history subjects remain too intangible for them. They have difficulties in understanding these subjects. Unless visual materials are added to the course, the knowledge cannot take root in their minds" (Ö19). "Subjects are sufficient for the stated gains. But we are unable to support the subjects with extracurricular activities" (Ö14). "Interest and learning lessen as the subjects lessen" (Ö18).

Opinions of teachers participating in the study who think the history subjects in the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum are insufficient to achieve the stated gains based on their own experiences and observations carry great importance regarding history teaching in primary schools.

Opinions of the Participants regarding Whether the Contents of History Subjects in Curriculum are Able to Endear History Subjects to Children at Primary School Level

When asked whether the contents of history subjects in the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum are able to endear history subject to children at primary school level, the answers provided the results shown in the Table 3.

Table 3. Opinions of the participants regarding whether the contents of history subjects in curriculum are able to endear history subjects to children at primary school level

Opinion	F	%
The subjects endears history	5	25
Should be improved	3	15
No opinion	1	05
The subjects do not endear history	11	55

When asked whether the contents of history subjects in the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum are able to endear history subject to children at primary school level: 25% of the participants expressed they do, 15% expressed they should be improved, 5% stated they have no thought on this matter, and 55% of the participants expressed the subjects do not endear history to the children.

The teachers who state the history subjects in the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum do not endear the field of history to primary school level children (Ö3-Ö4-Ö6-Ö7-Ö8-Ö9--Ö17-Ö18-Ö19-Ö20) express their thought as follows:

The teachers who state the history subjects in the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum cannot endear the science of history to the primary school level children (Ö3-Ö4-Ö6-Ö7-Ö8-Ö9--Ö17-Ö18-Ö19-Ö20) express their thoughts as follows: "Endearing history to children, especially children on primary school level is a very important matter, and the textbooks used in education must support this. The subjects need restructuring to make them more tangible" (Ö6-Ö9). "The books scatter the narration too wide in handling the subjects and the teaching program containing too many activities for too little time decreases efficiency and leads to omissions" (Ö4). "In order to endear history to children the lessons should include short, clear and understandable activities suitable for the level of children" (Ö3). "The contents remain too intangible, leading the students to drift away from the subject and fail to assimilate learning sufficiently" (Ö7). "The subjects fail to endear history because they fail to encompass national cultural values, the cultural environment of our geography in regard of material and spiritual culture, solely taking a narrow nationalist and religious view as its reference" (Ö17). "In order endear history to children at this level story books on the subjects should be read, especially in the case of the National War of Independence. I have been reading the series 'Anadolu'ya Can Verenler' ('Those Who Raise Anatolia') and I find it very beneficial. I find that 'complete the map' activities also ease learning and provide many benefits. The contents remain intangible, leading



children to rote learning, preventing them from internalising and learning to love the subject" Ö19. It is also pointed out that history "Must be seen and visited to solidify" the love for the subject (Ö11). As it is seen, teachers ascribe the failure to endear the history courses at primary school level to many reasons.

25% of the teachers states that the curriculum is suitable to endear history subject to the students and that they find the curriculum positive in this regard (Ö10-Ö12-Ö13-Ö14-Ö16), while those who expand on their viewpoint express their thoughts as follows: Some have ascribed their opinion to the basis of "Through analysis of recent history (Ö10), the positive structure of the curriculum in regard of time, chronology, changes and continuity" (Ö16), while some have emphasised, "Students love the subjects as long as they don't go into too much detail" (Ö13).

Teachers who stated the curriculum manages to partially endear the subject to students, but must be improved, recommend "the curriculum should be supported with short, clear and understandable activities suitable for the level of the students" (Ö8), "the curriculum should be taught in the order of near-to-far history" (Ö15), "trips and visualisations should be utilised to make subjects tangible" (Ö11) and "details unsuitable for the age group should not be taught" (Ö8).

Opinions of the Participants regarding Whether the Time Allotted for the Curriculum Gains is Sufficient

The teachers were asked "Do you think the class hours (time) allotted for teaching of history subjects to achieve the stated curriculum gains for history subjects under the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum are sufficient?" Answers of the teachers are as shown in the Table 4.

Table 4. Opinions of the participants regarding whether the time allotted for the curriculum gains is sufficient

Opinion	f	%
Sufficient	9	45
Insufficient	11	55

55% of the teachers participating in study find the allotted class hours (time) insufficient, while 45% finds it sufficient. Those who find it insufficient (Ö1-Ö3-Ö4-Ö7-Ö13-Ö14-Ö15-Ö16-Ö17-Ö18-Ö19) explain their reasons as follows: "I believe the Time is Not Sufficient. The students struggle with the intensive 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum following the Third Grade Life Studies content. Therefore I believe the allotted time is not sufficient" (Ö7). "Being only on single class level along with the large number of units sufficient time is not left for oral history activity and reflective thinking approach in a three class hour time period" (Ö16). "Lesson contents should be enriched in regard of basic life skills, providing more content which will contribute to communication, relationships, social and personal development as well as improvement in fields related to social problems, basic rights, duties and responsibilities the student will face in daily life, and the share of universal values and gains should be increased" (Ö17).

Excluding one teacher who stated "Class hours are sufficient. The classes should be supported with extracurricular trips" (Ö14), the teacher who found class hours (time) sufficient (Ö2-Ö5-Ö6-Ö8-Ö9-Ö10-Ö11-Ö12-Ö20) have contented themselves with only expressing class hours are sufficient or suitable.

Opinions of the Participants regarding Suitability of the Methods and Techniques Recommended in the Curriculum

The answers of the participating teachers to the question "What is your opinion regarding suitability of the methods and techniques recommended in the curriculum for teaching of 4th Grade Social Studies course?" were as shown in the Table 5.

**Table 5.** Opinions of the participants regarding suitability of the methods and techniques recommended in the curriculum

Opinion	f	%
Sufficient	8	40
Insufficient	10	50
Needs Improvement	2	10

As seen in Table 5, 40% of the teachers opine the time recommended for history subjects in the curriculum is sufficient, while 50% state it is insufficient, and 10% opine it needs improvement.

Among the teachers who find the methods and techniques recommended in the curriculum for teaching of the 4th Grade Social Studies course (Ö1-Ö2-Ö5-Ö6-Ö9-Ö10-Ö11-Ö12), only two of them explain their thoughts on the matter as, "*Practicable methods and techniques are provided. As teachers we can diversify the techniques to rescue the class from becoming monotone*" (Ö6-Ö9), while the others confine themselves to simply state it is suitable.

Teachers who find the recommended methods and techniques insufficient (Ö6-Ö9-Ö7-Ö13-Ö14-Ö15-Ö16-Ö17-Ö18-Ö19) express their thoughts on this matter as follows: "*The generally flat language used to convey the subject lead the students to treat it as a fairy tale. Alternatively, use of methods and techniques that can improve interest and focus of the students would be more beneficial*" (Ö7). Another teacher pointing out the methods and techniques are not suitable states, "*it is seen the intangible nature of the subjects negatively affects learning*" (Ö8). "*Being confined to the classroom, history teaching fails to provide efficient results even when narration and question-answer techniques or visuals like slideshows, videos and films are used. Lack of sufficient historic materials at the school is a large problem. If the class hours were sufficient the methods could be found suitable. However, due to insufficient class hours the recommended methods and techniques remain insufficient*" (Ö14). And another teacher recommends, "*More active strategies, especially in organising trips, visits and experiences, should be used to endear the subjects to the student. Rather than oral narration, research and study trips should be organised to museums, historic locations and natural sites, allowing the student to see historic and cultural elements on site*" (Ö17).

10% of the teachers participating in the study recommend, "*The methods and techniques should be further simplified,*" (Ö20) and "*they would be suitable if the class environment is made more suitable and materials are somewhat increased*" (Ö20).

Opinions of the Participants regarding Problems Experienced in Teaching of History Subjects

When asked "Do you experience problems in teaching history subjects in the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum?" answers of the teachers were as seen in the table below.

Table 6. Opinions of the participants regarding problems experienced in teaching of history subjects

Opinion	f	%
No I Don't	3	15
Yes I Do	18	85

15% of the teachers participating in the study state they do not experience problems in teaching of history subjects, while 85% state they experience various problems. The teachers who state they do not experience problems ascribe this state of affairs to the fact that the utilized methods and techniques being suitable for the student level (Ö6-Ö9) and that the subjects are made tangible by organizing historic and cultural locations in the local area (Ö17).

The teachers who state they experience problems in teaching the subjects (Ö1-Ö2-Ö3-Ö4-Ö5-Ö6-Ö7-Ö8-Ö10-Ö11-Ö12-Ö13-Ö14-Ö15-Ö16-Ö18-Ö20) classify the problems they face in three main headings, namely "the subjects being unsuitable for the student level, problems arising from teaching methods and techniques, and the subjects being uninteresting." Main problems arising from the subjects being unsuitable for student level are expressed as follows: "*The subjects being way above the*



student level (almost to the high school level) poses a large problem" (Ö11). History subjects being above the student level render them more intangible and over-levelled in comparison to other lesson subjects. "I have difficulty in teaching because subjects remain intangible" (Ö2). "I have problems in teaching the subjects in chronological order" (Ö8). "Student have trouble remembering past dates" (Ö1-Ö5-Ö12), "students have difficulty imagining historic events and facts in their minds, which make them intangible" (Ö13), "students cannot remembers the dates chronologically" (Ö8). Another problem is the fact that "students cannot act in ease when answering questions quite a ways above their level" (Ö3). Teachers participating in the study express the problems arising from teaching methods and techniques as follows: "The inability to utilise the diversity of methods and techniques contemplated in the curriculum, performance of evaluation according to the content rather than the stated gains, the failure to awaken interest of the student, the student's lack of knowledge regarding their own historic values and the student's lack of inclination to learn causes problems in teaching" (Ö7). "Lack of sufficient visual materials lead the subjects to remain intangible" (Ö15). "Lack of opportunities for cross-disciplinary linear activities sadly confines the teaching to a vertical and one sided progression." "The sudden intensification of history content in the curriculum in comparison to the previous grade and the deficiencies in preliminary learning of the students lead to learning difficulties" (Ö16). "We cannot take the students to visit historic locations. Simple narration in classroom is not sufficient" (Ö14). A large majority of the teachers participating in the study point out that significant difficulties are experienced in history teaching and these difficulties are faced on many levels.

Opinions of the Participants regarding Efficacy of History Subjects in Instilling an Awareness of History in the Students

The answers of the participating teachers to the question "What is your opinion regarding efficacy of 4th Grade history subjects in the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum in instilling an awareness of history in the students?" were as shown in the Table 7.

Table 7. Opinions of the participants regarding efficacy of history subjects in instilling an awareness of history in the students

Opinion	f	%
Efficient	6	30
Partially Efficient	3	15
Not Efficient	11	55

30% of the teachers participating in the study gave a positive answer regarding efficacy of 4th Grade history subjects in the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum in instilling an awareness of history in the students, while %15 think they are partially efficient, and 55% opines they are not efficient. The teachers who believe awareness of history is sufficiently formed (Ö2-Ö6-Ö8-Ö9-Ö16-Ö19) state; "while the students meet the Social Studies course for the first time in the 4th grade, since the groundwork for these subjects are formed in the previous years they begin the 4th grade at a high level of readiness. In this case, the awareness of history awakened in the children in the previous years is further developed with the history subjects in the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum" (Ö6-Ö9). Another teacher opines, "when supported with visual materials history teaching does not pose any problem in raising an awareness of history" (Ö8). "Of course it contributes. However, the teacher must guide the student well and use diverse materials" (Ö19).

Teachers who state the history framework in the curriculum is partially efficient in raising an awareness of history (Ö6-Ö12-Ö14-Ö20) express their thoughts as follows, "a more complete awareness of history can be achieved by utilising more materials and activities."

According to teachers participating in the study who state the history subjects in the curriculum are insufficient to raise an awareness of history (Ö1-Ö3-Ö4-Ö7-Ö10-Ö11-Ö13-Ö14-Ö15-Ö17-Ö18) the most important reason for this state of affairs is the fact that "history lessons are monotone and uninteresting for the children." "Under the current circumstances of history lessons opportunities for



trips, visits and experiences are limited and therefore these lessons remain limited and ineffective in raising an awareness of history" (Ö14). Another reason is stated as follows, "since awareness of history is a field which requires high levels of abstraction it becomes difficult to fulfil" (Ö17). Therefore, "tangible, uncomplicated, clearer gains should be targeted, and lesson contents should be structured according to this. Subjects and content determined according to student level, and gains and teaching methods determined according to these will be more effective in development of an awareness of history" (Ö13). To this end the subjects should be "moved away from monotone structures and towards the interests of students" (Ö1) in a manner more suitable and more attractive for modern needs and expectations.

Level of Correlation between the Values, Qualifications and Basic Abilities Defined under the Curriculum and the History Subjects

When asked about their opinions regarding the level of congruity and proportionality between the values, qualifications and basic abilities defined under the curriculum and the history subjects, their answers were as shown in the Table 8.

Table 8. Opinions of the participants regarding level of correlation between the values, qualifications and basic abilities defined under the curriculum and the history subjects

Opinion	F	%
Congruent	11	55
Partially Congruent	3	15
Incongruent	4	20
No Opinion	2	10

55% of the teachers participating in the study have stated history subjects are congruent and proportional with the values, qualifications and abilities determined in the curriculum, while 15% state they are partially congruent, 20% states they are incongruent, and 10% state they have no thought on the matter.

Teachers participating in the study who find the correlation between the values, qualifications and basic abilities defined under the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum and the history subjects defined under the stated gains as congruent and proportional (Ö1-Ö2-Ö3-Ö4-Ö6-Ö7-Ö8-Ö10-Ö12-Ö13-Ö16) have mostly simply stated they find these elements congruent and proportional, without expanding on their thoughts. Those who expand on their thoughts have expressed their opinion as follows; "Children are able to easily learn, understand and internalise the National War of Independence" (Ö10). "The subjects seem sufficient for core values. Course-specific abilities are very well prepared" (Ö16). "I definitely believe they are correlated. I believe values must definitely have a place in the content of social studies course, and these values are closely related to history subjects. I believe values like love of flag and nation, patriotism, etc. should be taught in content of this course" (Ö7).

Teachers participating in the study who find the correlation between the values, qualifications and basic abilities defined under the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum and the history subjects defined under the stated gains as partially congruent (Ö9-Ö18-20) state that "class hours for history subjects should be increased towards this end and unnecessary details should be avoided" (Ö19) and these subjects "should be supported with suitable activities" for a more congruent curriculum.

Teachers participating in the study who find the correlation between the values, qualifications and basic abilities defined under the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum and the history subjects defined under the stated gains as incongruent (Ö11-Ö14-Ö17-Ö19) opine, "in order to repair this problem material cultural elements like literature, arts, culture, paintings, sculptures, etc. should be selected in accord with learning characteristics of the students. Care should be shown to ensure that spiritual cultural elements like traditions, customs and usages conform to daily life experiences, and these should be determined in a fashion comporting to realistic needs and ensuring cultivation of equal and free individuals. Traditional values which do not align with modern social life should be eliminated from the curriculums" (Ö17).



Two teachers (Ö5-Ö15) have stated they have no thought on the correlation between the values, qualifications and basic abilities defined under the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum and the history subjects defined under the stated gains.

Recommendations for Effective and Efficient History Teaching at Primary School Level

Finally, the teachers participating in the study were asked what are their recommendations for achieving effective and efficient history teaching for primary school children. When tabulated the feedback from the teachers appears as follows:

Table 9. What are your recommendations for effective history teachings at primary school level?

Opinions	f
Subjects should be supported more with visuals like images, films, maps, etc.	8
Trips to Historic Locations should be organised	5
Intangible contents should be replaced with tangible and age-appropriate content	4
Teachers should be provided with seminars on history teaching	4
Teaching should be based on practical and experience learning	3
Less subjects, less stated gains, more activities	2
Enactments, dramatization and gamification	2
Basic life skills should be taken as basis for teaching	2
Social Studies classes should be formed	1
Subjects should be made into stories	1
Social Studies libraries should be formed	1
Class equipment should be increased	1
Biographies should be utilised	1
	35

Finally, the teachers were asked what are their recommendations for effective history teaching at primary school level. It is seen the answers of participating teacher show great diversity. Some of the teachers have answered very shortly, while others have provided quite detailed responses. It is remarkable that some of these opinions support each other or even overlap. It is observed that some recommendations by the teachers for increasing effectiveness of history teaching are frequently expressed by many others, while some opinions remain particularly singular.

History lessons should be taught with more visualisation: Chief among the recommendations expressed by teachers (Ö1-Ö2-Ö3-Ö8-Ö12-Ö14-Ö17-Ö19) for more effective and more efficient history teaching is the idea that more visuals should be used in history teaching (40% - f 8). Use of visuals like images, maps, films, videos, etc. suitable for the subject and the student level emerges as the most effective solution. Teachers express the importance of visuals for history teaching as follows: "Teachers and students should be provided with access to visuals, worksheets and activities prepared according to subjects in the curriculum and level of the students through EBA environment in order to make lessons more effective, more interesting and more fun" (Ö8). "History can be better presented to children using cartoons and animations" (Ö2). History subjects in Primary 4th Grade Curriculum "should be made more effective and more fun for the children" (Ö1). "Subject should be made more endearing with short and concise narration and exemplary visuals" (Ö3). "I make a point of reading children's books about the National War of Independence and have my class read them too. I also add small videos about them. I make sure to include map activities. I do all I can to visualise the subject" (Ö19). "Teaching using short and concise films would be more effective" (Ö12). "Visuals and video presentations should be used more" (Ö13-Ö19).

Study trips should be organised to historic locations: Many teachers (Ö4-Ö10-Ö11-Ö12-Ö14) have strongly pointed out in various ways that access to study trips to locations of important historic events, museums and archaeological sites providing the opportunity to see, touch and feel history on site. It is emphasised that such efforts should be supported by the Ministry of National Education. "Trips to important historic locations like Çanakkale Soldiers' Cemetery, Anıtkabir, etc. should be organised in first grade and even in preschool" (Ö14). Especially "Trips to museums and historic locations to learn about the history of the National War of Independence. The Ministry of National Education should undertake these excursions and make them mandatory" (Ö10). It is opined lives of important historic



personages should be included in history textbooks. Curriculums *"should be organised to better suit learning by practice and experience. Learning by practice, experience, observation and feeling should be promoted and curriculums should be structured according to this"* (Ö11). *"Short and concise films should be made and used in lessons"* (Ö12). *"Less subjects and more practical activities should be included, and historic locations should be visited for travel and study"* (Ö4).

History subjects should be structured with tangible learning suitable for student level: Another important solution recommended by the teachers (Ö6-Ö9-Ö17) making lessons less intangible, structuring subjects to include tangible elements understandable for the students, more suitable to student level. *"Rather than details exceeding the student level and boring the student, more tangible elements can be used"* (Ö6-Ö9-Ö4). *"Activities suitable for student level"* should be planned. *"Efforts should be made to provide less details and more lasting learning with a smaller number of gains and less content"* (Ö17). *"Since this is an intangible field, the teaching methods and strategies should be made more suitable for learning principles, using a path from tangible to intangible, simple to complex, and tools like trips, observations and enactments should be utilised more"* (Ö17). Connections should be made to historic events which promote and support basic life skills. *"Subjects on Atatürk's Principles should be supported with simpler, more understandable, tangible learning contents, and visuals related to these subjects and historic films should be prepared and presented for the students. Students should be advised to read children's books on the National War of Independence and classrooms should have libraries including such books"* (Ö17).

Teachers should be provided with trainings on history subjects and history teaching methods: Another recommendation of the teachers participating in the study (Ö7-Ö8-Ö14-Ö20) to increase efficacy of history teaching is provision of on-the-job trainings to teachers regarding history subjects and history teaching methods. *"Trainings should be provided to teachers to remedy deficiencies of teachers regarding history teaching methods and techniques"* (Ö7). *"Researchers in the field of history should give seminars to teachers at schools"* (Ö14). *"Schools should be provided with subscriptions to periodicals on history,"* (Ö14). *"Teachers should be provided with history teaching seminars even if only by remote learning"* (Ö8-Ö20).

"In order to help children like history lessons the subjects should be made easier to understand by storification and gamification" (Ö17). *"Teachers should be provided with drama training so each teacher can utilise drama"* (Ö2).

In order to achieve these recommendations the teachers support the idea of *"increasing the number of class hours"* and *"forming a Social Studies workshop like the science laboratories in each school"* (Ö15) in order to remedy structural and equipment deficiencies. Another teacher points out the approach that made them love history as a solution: *"All my life I never liked history lesson and thought I would never understand it. Because my teachers would only narrate the subject without using any materials and so what I hear would sound like a lullaby to me. There was nothing to motivate me or awaken my interest. My opinion on this matter changed when I became a teachers, because when I started to think about how I could teach Social Studies course most effectively and made efforts to that end history lessons become more enjoyable both for me and my students"* (Ö19).

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

The results indicate that history teaching provided at primary school level has many problems. While opinions of the teachers vary regarding the efficiency and efficacy of the history teaching provided in 4th grade, it is revealed that it bears many problems in general. This result is congruent with the results of a study (Er & Bayındır, 2015) which exhibits that history teaching in scope of the Social Studies course fails to provide the expected efficiency. The acquired results indicate that deficiencies found in the previous curriculum have not been repaired in the last curriculum either.

The result presenting that the history subjects in the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum are congruent and proportional with the values, qualifications and basic skill stated in the curriculum constitutes the only



item where more than half of the teachers judge the program meaningful and positive in itself. This result emerges as the only point which is effectively taken into account in relation to a previous study (Yiğittir & Kaymakçı, 2012) and which shows partial positive development at 4th grade level.

While the point that curriculums related to history teaching should be structured according to intellectual and cognitive development status of the students on all levels is a matter strongly emphasised in studies on this field (Safran & Şimşek, 2006; Dilek, 2007; Dilek & Alabaş, 2010), results of this study exhibit this recommendation was disregarded. A large majority of the teachers participating in the study opine that the subjects in 2018 Social Studies curriculum are not suitable for the purposes stated in the curriculum and must be restructured in a manner suitable for cognitive and intellectual levels of the students. The recommendation that history subjects in the curriculum should be simplified has also been a part of studies on the previous curriculum (Er & Bayındır, 2015). The notion that students have difficulty memorising the dates of historic events is congruent with the results of Pala & Şimşek (2016) study. In conclusion, this results in a very low level of achievement of gains stated in the curriculum. Another result derived from the study is the fact that number of class hours allotted for history subjects in the Social Studies course is insufficient. In addition, due to the limited time allotted for history subjects, activities cannot be performed sufficiently and even teaching of the subjects falls behind. This result supports previous studies (Er & Bayındır, 2015). Results of the study show that all problems pointed out for the previous curriculums have not been remedied in 2018 Social Studies Curriculum either. Therefore, history subjects which remain too intangible, which children have trouble imagining in their minds and difficulty in comprehending, lead children to dislike history lessons.

One of the most important findings of the study is the fact that the history subjects taught in scope of the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum is not effective and is insufficient in raising an awareness of history in the students. Teachers ascribe the main reasons for this state of affairs as the insufficient time allotment, lack of support for extracurricular and curricular activities, lack of educational equipment infrastructure for activities in history lessons and their own lack of proficiency in history teaching methods and use of technology in history teaching.

Teachers have revealed their opinion that visual materials like images, videos, animations, etc. should be intensively used for effective teaching of history subjects in Primary School 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum. This result is congruent with results of previous studies (Akbaba, 2003; Akbaba, 2005a; Akbaba, 2005b; Akbaba, Keçe & Erdem, 2012; Alabaş, 2007) which support effectiveness of visuals in increasing effectiveness of history teaching.

Teachers recommend providing history teaching in a manner supporting learning by practice, experience, observation and feeling in order to achieve the expected efficiency in teaching of history subjects in Primary School 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum. In this regard, a significant number of teachers have recommended, in their answers to various questions, organisation of extracurricular activities like visits to museums and historic locations and restructuring of the curriculums accordingly as the second most effective solution. These results of the study supports the results of previous studies (Ata, 2013; Ata, 2015; Kısa & Gazel; Öner, 2015; Berk, 2017; Üztemur, Dinç ve Acun, 2018) which show extracurricular activities are quite effective in history teaching at middle school level and exhibits that the same is also valid for primary school level.

Another important solution recommendation, as supported by a previous study (Berk, 2012) is the notion of using historic re-enactments and drama to increase children's interest in the course in history teaching at primary school level and that there is a need to provide teachers with training in this regard to this end. In the study teachers have also recommended determination of the subjects in the curriculum on the basis of basic life skills, creation of specially equipped Social Studies classrooms containing lesson materials (visuals, books, museum items, etc.) which facilitate and reinforce Social Studies teaching as seen in the example of science laboratories, and use of stories and biographies of important historic personages as solutions for effective history teaching at primary school level.



Recommendations

History education provided in scope of the Primary School Social Studies courses should be restructured on basis of basic life skills and student interests in accord with intellectual and cognitive development level of the students. Curriculums should be prepared with participation of all stakeholders, including comprehensive and inclusive information from current, qualitative and quantitative studies based on data obtained from teachers and students as well as academicians.

History teaching inside and outside classroom should be made more efficient and enjoyable by using all kinds of visual materials (images, maps, films, animations, etc.) and organising study and observation trips to various historic locations like museums, archaeological sites, etc. and the financing and organisation affairs necessary to achieve these practices should be resolved by the Ministry of National Education (MEB). The activities and visual materials to be used in the classes should be prepared by specialists according to various levels supporting attention and learning capacities of students and opened to access of teachers indefinitely and without charge.

Primary school teachers should be provided with on-the-job trainings regarding history subjects and history teaching methods without charge in order to keep their knowledge and skill current.

Qualitative and quantitative studies should be conducted on history teaching at schools by annually gathering feedback from students and teachers to analyse needs and to determine strong and weak aspects in order to ensure effective and efficient history teaching at schools.

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