



Understanding Changes About 1998 And 2005 Turkish Social Studies Curricula In The Light Of Teachers' Perceptions

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Abstract

Social studies and related courses have been taught in Turkey for years. In the last two decades, two reforms occurred in social studies education in 1998 and 2005. The aim of this study is to elicit social studies teachers' perceptions about the changes brought by the 1998 and 2005 social studies curricular changes. Within the context of qualitative approach, this study used phenomenology, interviewing twelve social studies teachers who were teaching both 1998 and 2005 curricula in different public primary schools of Trabzon city center. The data were collected using a semi-standardized interview protocol. Participants were invited to the study by using a snowball strategy and the data were collected in the fall semester of 2011-2012 academic years. The collected data were analyzed using content analysis. The results of the study showed that contrary to the 1998 curriculum reforms, a majority of social studies teachers supported the 2005 curriculum except for presentation of historical and geographical subjects and they suggested some changes in in-service education to improve the quality of teaching the curriculum.

Keywords

Social studies
Curriculum
Teacher
Turkey

Article Info

Received: 09.01.2014
Accepted: 02.03.2015
Online Published: 11.17.2015

DOI: 10.15390/EB.2015.3901

Introduction

Social studies is a course that examines persons' relations with physical and social environment concerning human characteristics, and consists of integrating social sciences, human sciences and other areas like philosophy, religious knowledge, etc. (Barth & Demirtaş, 1997). Social studies aims to train active citizens who can solve problems and make decisions based on knowledge about changing conditions of their country and the world (Öztürk, 2010). Social studies is taught to train good and active citizens, and integrate students to the society with its history, geography, culture and institutions (Erden, 1996).

Social studies has a strong history in the Turkish educational system and some scholars like Sönmez (1999) and Sözer (1998) claim that even in the early Turkish era they taught social studies and related subject matters. After accepting Islam, social studies was continued to include national customs, cultural traditions, moral values, Islamic life style, and some social rules and knowledge (Akdağ & Kaymakcı, 2011). This situation was consistent until the *Tanzimat era* during the Ottoman Empire. With the *Tanzimat reform* and 1869 *Regulation of Public Education (Maarif-i Umumiye*

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Nizamnamesi), the perception of social studies changed and it was taught in schools under the name of history and geography. In addition to these subjects, civics, moral knowledge and economics were also effectively included in the school programs in the 2nd Constitutional Period (1908-1922) during the Ottoman times (Akyüz, 2010; Öztürk & Otluoğlu, 2003; Safran, 2008; Üstel, 2004).

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic was founded on October 29, 1923. Changing of the state and rules didn't affect the situation of social studies and social studies maintained its importance in the Turkish educational system with some reforms in 1924, 1926, 1936, 1948, 1962, 1968, 1998 and 2005. In the early years of Republic, perception and usage of social studies was handled as it was in the Ottoman times. Social studies included history, geography and civics, and the curricula were designed as separate subject (single-discipline) approach until 1968 (Öztürk & Otluoğlu, 2003). In 1968, Ministry of National Education (MONE) made some radical changes combining history, geography and civics under the name of social studies reflecting the model of the American educational system and New Social Studies Movement (Öztürk, 2010). In addition, as part of the 1968 reform, they developed social studies curriculum for elementary school 4th and 5th grades, and middle school 6th, 7th and 8th grades (MONE, 1968).

In 1998, other changes were made in social studies. The political situation of the country, in particular the 28 of February process², required some educational reforms including a transition to an eight-year uninterrupted and compulsory education for all school-age children and curriculum developments. In this case, 1998 social studies curriculum was developed. In the program, social studies was based on a holistic approach for 4th to 7th grades in primary schools. 1998 social studies curriculum, admitted as a follow up of 1968 curriculum, was designed based on behaviorist and multidisciplinary approaches. In addition, new courses called "civics and human rights education" were taught in 7th and 8th grades of primary schools and were separated from social studies (MONE, 1998).

The last radical change in social studies was done in 2005. With the aims of modernization, joining to EU, integrating recent local and global developments into the educational area, and creating a new educational perception, MONE started to design primary school curricula (MONE, 2005a). The 2005 social studies curriculum reform was developed based on constructivist, interdisciplinary and thematic approaches adapted from the U.S.' NCSS (National Council of the Social Studies) themes. To make the curriculum more cohesive, civics and human right education courses were removed and their subjects were integrated into the social studies curriculum (Ata, 2010; MONE, 2005b; MONE, 2005c).

As can be understood, 1998 and 2005 curricula are important due to some characteristics like grounded theories, using approaches, contents, and etc. Indeed, there are lots of introductory and evaluative studies on 1998 and 2005 social studies curricula in the related literature (Açıklın, 2011; Akdağ, 2008; Alabaş & Kamer, 2007; Anıl, 1999; Ata, 2010; Aykaç & Başar, 2005; Aynacı, 2001; Ayten, 2006; Çalışkan, 2010; Dinç & Doğan 2010; Doğanay & Sarı, 2008; Dönmez, 2003; Ersoy & Kaya, 2009; Gömleksiz & Bulut, 2006; Kabapınar, Herson & Öztürk, 2008; Kavak, 2006; Kaymakçı, 2009; Kılıç, 1999; Kılıçoğlu, 2007; Özdemir, 2009; Öztürk & Dilek, 2005; Pınarbaşı, 2007; Yazıcı & Koca, 2008). There are also some comparative studies on the 1998 and 2005 social studies curricula³. These studies focus on the evaluation of 4th and 5th grades' aims/attainments (Okta, 2008), the situation of history in 4th and 5th

² 28 February Process: With the pressure of Turkish military members of National Security Council, the government had been obliged to do some reforms after 28 February 1997 decisions.

³ In this study, I specifically focused on studies comparing 1998 and 2005 social studies curricula. Also I ignored the studies explaining the historical development of social studies curricula and comparing the social studies curricula in the pre-republican and republican periods.

grades curricula and textbooks (Tümsek, 2006), the situation of history in 6th and 7th grades curricula and textbooks (Berk, 2008), the situation of history in whole (4th to 7th grades) curriculum (Şimşek, 2009), values education (Keskin, 2008; Sarıcan, 2006), concepts in textbooks (Yılmaz, 2009), some qualifications of textbooks (Kalıpçı, 2008), measurement and assessment methods and techniques (Ataman, 2007; Çalışkan & Yıldız, 2008; Pınarbaşı, 2007), the situation of democratic citizenship attributions in curriculum (Keleşoğlu, 2008), the reflections of globalization on curriculum and textbooks (Sağlam, Vural & Akdeniz, 2011), the evaluation of 4th and 5th grades' curricula (Semenderoğlu & Gülersoy, 2005), and the evaluation of whole (4th to 7th grades) social studies curriculum (Ayva, 2008). These studies were implemented with prospective classroom teachers (Ayva, 2008) and classroom teachers (Ataman, 2007; Kalıpçı, 2008; Sarıcan, 2006; Okta, 2008), primary school 5th grade students (Keskin, 2008) and primary school 6th, 7th and 8th grade students (Keleşoğlu, 2008). The other studies examined documents like curriculum (Sarıcan, 2006; Semenderoğlu & Gülersoy, 2005; Keskin, 2008; Şimşek, 2009), textbooks (Çalışkan & Yıldız, 2008; Kalıpçı, 2008; Pınarbaşı, 2007; Yılmaz, 2009), and curriculum and textbooks (Berk, 2008; Sağlam et al., 2011; Tümsek, 2006). As can be understood these explanations, although there are lots of comparative studies about some aspects of curricula like aims/attainments, contents and measurement and assessment, there are no studies comparing the implementation of social studies curricula in 1998 and 2005 by teachers. Also there are no studies on this topic written in a foreign language intended for the social studies community outside of Turkey. With this in mind, this study will make a significant contribution to the research literature in Turkey and internationally and it will guide further studies which will be written on this topic in the near future.

The Aim & Research Questions

The aim of this study was to elicit social studies teachers' perceptions about the changes brought by the 1998 and 2005 social studies curricula reforms. The research questions were:

1. What are social studies teachers' perceptions about 1998 social studies curriculum?
2. What are social studies teachers' perceptions about 2005 social studies curriculum?
3. How do social studies teachers interpret the changes that occurred from 1998 to 2005 in the social studies curricula?

Method

This study was designed as a qualitative research. As it is well known, in qualitative studies, researchers explore individuals' perceptions about some subjects. Also they focus on personal feelings, formed in individuals' insights, instead of statistical data (Bell, 2010). In this context, this study used phenomenology, one of the methods of qualitative research, because it provides focusing upon individuals' experiences about a phenomena or a program and usually using interviews as a data collection tool (Merriam, 2009).

Participants

In total, twelve social studies teachers were participants in this study. All of them graduated from social studies teacher education programs, eight were males and four were female, their teaching experiences changed from 8 to 10 years and they were teaching in different public primary schools in Trabzon city center. They had been teaching social studies courses during both 1998 and 2005 social studies curricula. Participants were invited to the study by using a snowball strategy. So I asked them in turn who they knew taught during both 1998 and 2005 primary school social studies curricula, who graduated from social studies education program, and who should I talk to about 1998 and 2005 social studies curricula (Patton, 2002). In total, 12 teachers agreed to participate.

Data Source & Collection

This study used interviews, an instrument of qualitative methods, because they provide in-depth data from participants about a topic within their natural setting. Also, participants can explain their opinions without any effects on others. Furthermore, interviewers have direct contact with interviewees so they can correct their responses again and again (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

There are three types of interviews—standardized, unstandardized, and semi-standardized interviews (Berg, 1998). For this research, semi-standardized interviews were used to collect the data. I took the following steps. First, I reviewed the literature in terms of related studies about the 1998 and 2005 social studies curricula. Second, I divided the studies into two major categories: introductory and evaluative. Based on what I learned from the literature and related to my research questions, I developed a semi-standardized interview protocol that included eight questions. To provide validity, the interview protocol was examined by two social studies field experts and pilot interviews were conducted with two social studies teachers. From this feedback, I removed two questions from the protocol draft and therefore had a final version of the interview with six questions.

The data for this study were collected in the fall semester of the 2011-2012 academic years. I interviewed the participants via different methods: I first emailed the general information of the study and a semi-standardized interview protocol to the participants, so they had general ideas about what they will do. With each participant we decided on a meeting date and I conducted the interviews in person. During the interviewing time, I took notes on each participant's responses and sometimes asked follow-up questions on some different ways like face to face meetings, e-mail and phone to get in-depth data from them. No to loss of meaning, I collected and transcribed all of the data in Turkish.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through a content analysis technique in order to deeply identify participants' perceptions and attitudes about the topic (Stemler, 2001). To provide validity and reliability, I first wrote the full text of interviews then, as Silverman (2006) suggests, I did follow questioning with the participants where I needed further responses to clearly understand their responses. I included member checking of the data by giving the participants a copy of the interviews and asking them to read the texts and give me any feedback to correct or add to the interview transcripts. To establish reliability, I did researcher triangulation (Patton, 2002). In this context, I asked a social studies education field expert and a social studies teacher⁴ to use the coding system. We coded the interviews individually. We also compared our coding with each others' by using (Reliability= [Agreement/ (Agreement + Disagreement)] x 100) formula and computed the agreement percentage (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as 81.20%. Then typically differences were negotiated and a joint decision made on the coding. After completing the coding, I translated all of the data into English and wrote up the data describing the categories and themes with frequency and percentages in tables. Also I gave pseudonyms to each participant (i.e. Teacher A, Teacher B) and supported the interpretations of the data by using citations from interviews.

⁴ In this study, a social studies teacher was involved in coding the data. He received his BA from a social studies program in Turkey, and he taught in both the 1998 and 2005 social studies curricula. This teacher also got his MA degree in social studies education and took some courses in research methods including so he knew how to analyze qualitative data. So he had experiences with data analysis procedure and both of the curricula and he might better understand the teachers' perceptions than researcher and social studies education field expert.

Results

In this section, I describe the findings from the data analysis and my interpretations toward research questions:

Social Studies Teachers' Perceptions about the 1998 Social Studies Curriculum:

In this category, social studies teachers' perceptions are presented on the basis of innovations, advantages, and disadvantages of 1998 social studies curriculum.

-Innovations of 1998 Social Studies Curriculum: Table 1 shows participants' perceptions about the innovations of 1998 social studies curriculum. As can be seen in the table, half of the participants (50%) claimed that the 1998 curriculum brought a new approach to Turkish educational system. By contrast, 41.67% of participants mentioned that the 1998 curriculum did not bring innovations. Finally 8.33% of participants said 1998 curriculum brought some different subjects.

Table 1. Participants' Perceptions about Innovations of 1998 Social Studies Curriculum

Themes	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
A new approach	6	50.00
No innovations	5	41.67
Different subjects	1	8.33
Total	12	100

50% of participants assert that 1998 social studies curriculum was a great reform for the improvement of Turkish social studies education and it was designed with a new perception. In this case, Teacher A said that *"As I remember, before 1998 curriculum, except for elementary grades (4th and 5th grades), social studies was taught toward separate courses called National History, National Geography and Citizenship Knowledge. However after 28 February decisions about our educational system changed and social studies was reconsidered. So social studies was started to teach in the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades of primary schools with multidisciplinary approach. In this case, topics related to social studies we tried to combine."*

41.67% of the participants claim that 1998 curriculum is a follow-up of 1968 curriculum and it did not brought any new innovations. Teacher D advocated that *"As I remember the 1998 social studies curriculum, it did not show any innovative characteristics. If you examine the 1968 and 1998 curricula, you can see it very easily. You can see in general that the course objectives are similar. In terms of methods and teaching they are similar as well. Both of the curricula consider teachers as authoritarians and they suggest teacher-centered learning."*

8.33% of participants expressed that 1998 curriculum included different subjects. Teacher J said that *"I think 1998 curriculum had some interesting aspects and we can admit them as innovations. For example, 1998 curricula brought new current event topics such as traffic and citizen rights."*

-Advantages of 1998 Social Studies Curriculum: Participants' perceptions about the advantages of 1998 social studies curriculum are presented in Table 2. As shown in the table, 75% of participants claimed that the addition of detailed subjects was advantageous, 16.67% of participants appreciated the stress on democracy, and 8.33% of participants valued the inclusion of current events.

Table 2. Participants' Perceptions about the Advantages of 1998 Social Studies Curriculum

Themes	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Detailed subjects	9	75.00
Stress on democracy	2	16.67
Including current events	1	8.33
Total	12	100

75% of participants mentioned that 1998 curriculum presented detailed information about subjects related to social studies. For example Teacher L said that *"In our former curriculum, in-depth information was given. Specifically, history and geography subjects, information frequently covered in the national entrance exams, were presented in-detail. So students could learn historical and geographical subjects very well and they could more successful than now."*

16.67% of participants explained that the 1998 curriculum gave more importance to democracy and there were textbooks with the subjects related to democracy. For instance Teacher H expressed that *"As I remember, one of the most advantageous of the 1998 curriculum was stressing democracy and its characteristics. Democracy was handled within some separate units and subjects in the curriculum and textbooks. Also in the 7th and 8th grades, we taught two separate courses called citizenship and human rights education. So the 1998 curriculum had much more focus on democracy than the former curricula."*

8.33% of participants indicated that current events was an advantage. In this case, Teacher J said *"As I mentioned for the innovations, including current events was the most advantage of the 1998 curriculum. Thus our students were aware of the information in which they could use in their lives. They could learn the traffic rules, jobs, bad habits and etc."*

-Disadvantages of 1998 Social Studies Curriculum: Table 3 shows participants' perceptions about the disadvantages of 1998 social studies curriculum. As defined in the table, they claimed that it was based on behaviorist approach (23.81%), it included an intense amount of content (21.43%), it ignored of the consideration of value and skills (19.05%), it did not use modern teaching methods (16.67%), and it lacked educational technologies (11.90%) and modern assessment-evaluation methods (7.14%).

Table 3. Participants' Perceptions about the Disadvantages of 1998 Social Studies Curriculum

Themes	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Based on behaviorist approach	10	23.81
Intensity of content	9	21.43
Ignoring of value and skills	8	19.05
Inappropriate to use modern teaching methods	7	16.67
Inappropriate to use educational technologies	5	11.90
Inappropriate to use modern assessment-evaluation methods	3	7.14
Total	42	100

23.81% of participants mentioned that basing the curriculum on behaviorist approach was the strongest disadvantage of the 1998 curriculum. In this sub-theme teachers emphasized the characteristics of behaviorism. Teacher C reported that *"I think all of the disadvantages of 1998 curriculum derived from the educational philosophy: behaviorism. Due to behaviorist approach the curriculum ignored the*

process and it focused on behaviors and results. So this perception suggested memorizing and this caused lots of problems.”

21.43% of participants complained about the intensity of the content of the 1998 curriculum. Under this sub-theme teachers had to manage objectives, subjects and time. Teacher B expressed that *“The content of the curriculum was very wide. Also there were many objectives in the curriculum and they required in-depth information and memorizing. For example related to Turkish regional geography there was an objective: Students know composing factors of Turkish geographical regions.”*

19.05% of participants reported that the 1998 curriculum ignored the importance of value and skills in social studies education because it emphasized the importance of content knowledge. Teacher E stated that *“The 1998 curriculum was so knowledge oriented. In the curriculum, value education and skills education were ignored. For example we didn’t teach some important skills such as inquiry, reflective inquiry, using information technology, observation, problem solving, and so on. We didn’t admit knowledge as a produced value. I think this was caused from the result- based educational system, specifically national entrance exams.”*

16.67% of participants discussed deficiencies of the 1998 curriculum related to using modern teaching methods. Teacher I complained *“Toward the 1998 curriculum I had to do teacher centered education, because course content had lots of topics, and I had to be quick to finish it. So I didn’t use modern methods like multiple intelligence, I frequently used expression method and question-answer technique in my courses, in parallel with this my students had to listen to me as robots and they had to memorize the subjects. So students got bored and they didn’t like social studies.”*

11.90% of participants stressed the problem of using modern educational technologies in the 1998 curriculum. Teacher L explained *“In those times, I had to use only textbook as an educational technologic tool. I had to do teacher and textbook centered education. Also my school’s facilities weren’t adequate. In my pre-service education process, I took a educational technologies and material development course, and the course professor always told us you should use educational technologies such as overhead projector, acetates, models, and so on. However after I became a teacher I couldn’t find any educational technologies in my school. Also I had a curriculum to finish and content that was very intensive and complex. Because of these I couldn’t use educational technologies and materials except for textbooks and maps.”*

7.14% of participants emphasized involving modern assessment-evaluation methods into courses. Teacher A stated that *“One of the most important disadvantages of 1998 curriculum was related to assessment and evaluation methods. In this context I had to use only information based evaluation and assessment such as written exam, true-false, gap-filling, and matching tests. I did this because I had to prepared my students for the national high school entrance exam and information based questions were generally asked in these exams. So I didn’t use modern assessment and evaluation methods like portfolio, rubric, observation, and etc.”*

Social Studies Teachers’ Perceptions about 2005 Social Studies Curriculum:

In this category, social studies teachers’ perceptions are presented related to innovations, advantages and disadvantages of the 2005 social studies curriculum.

-Innovations of 2005 Social Studies Curriculum: As can be seen in the table, 54.55% of participants mention structure of curriculum, and 45.45% of the participants stress pedagogy.

Table 4. Participants’ Perceptions about Innovations of 2005 Social Studies Curriculum

Themes	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Structure of curriculum	12	54.55
Pedagogy	10	45.45
Total	22	100

54.55% of the participants mentioned the structure of curriculum. In this context, they mentioned the education theory, objectives, content, and organization. Teacher C said that *“The 2005 curriculum brought lots of innovations. The organization of curriculum was reshaped. In this sense, we saw new elements in the curriculum: learning theme, attainment, concept, value, skill, activity samples and modern approaches for teaching-learning, and assessment-evaluation. Also in the curriculum, content was handled with an interdisciplinary approach.”*

45.45% of participants stressed pedagogy. Teacher A explained *“Before 2005 curriculum, we did not know how to use modern pedagogy, so we used to employ traditional methods, materials, and assessment tools in our courses. However with 2005 curriculum, we started to use modern pedagogy. We met modern teaching methods like creative drama, six thinking hats and jigsaw, modern educational technologies like internet, computer and virtual museums, modern assessment-evaluation tools like rubrics, portfolios and structured grids.”*

-Advantages of 2005 Social Studies Curriculum: Table 5 displays participants’ perceptions about the advantages of the 2005 social studies curriculum. Participants stressed student centered learning (22%), teaching methods (20%), educational technologies and materials (18%), assessment and evaluation tools (14%), activities (10%), value and skills education (8%), up-to-date information (6%), and roles of parents (2%).

Table 5. Participants’ Perceptions about the Advantages of 2005 Social Studies Curriculum

Themes	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Student-centered learning	11	22
Teaching methods	10	20
Educational technologies and materials	9	18
Assessment and evaluation tools	7	14
Activities	5	10
Value and skill education	4	8
Up-to-date information	3	6
Roles of parents	1	2
Total	50	100

22% of the participants mentioned student centered learning. According to Teacher F, *“The 2005 curriculum changed the teaching perceptions of teachers. In this curriculum teacher and textbook oriented teaching were left behind, and student-centered teaching was put to use. In this context the intensity of the content subjects was reduced and it teachers were enabled to use student-centered applications. Thanks to curriculum, students became more active doing more exploration and they started to reach for information by themselves.”*

20% of the participants identified teaching methods. Under this sub-theme, they pointed out that in the 2005 curriculum it is appropriate to use different teaching strategies, methods, and techniques. Teacher D told *“With this curriculum we started to use modern teaching methods like discovery learning, problem solving, creative drama, project and brain-based learning, cooperative learning, field trips and etc. So we gave up traditional methods. As a course, social studies is more enjoyable and interesting now.”*

18% of the participants included educational technologies and materials in their responses. In this case they generally emphasized electronic and written educational technologies and materials. Teacher J said that *“One of the big advantages of 2005 curriculum was related to educational technology. This curriculum suggests that we use modern educational technologies such as computer, internet, virtual museums, worksheets, models and simulations in our courses. Besides with this curriculum, textbooks were changed and became more interesting and attractive. Also we started to use a textbook set, including textbook, teacher’s guide and workbook.”*

14% of the participants mentioned assessment and evaluation tools. In this context, they remarked about the usage of alternative assessment and evaluation tools. Teacher L reported that *“One of the advantages of the 2005 curriculum can be shown in the assessment and evaluation approaches. As you know we used result-based assessment and evaluation methods and tools in 1998 curriculum. However this situation was changed in 2005 curriculum. We now focus on the process of education rather than the results. In this case 2005 curriculum suggests that we should use modern assessment and evaluation tools like rubrics, structured grids, portfolios, project and performance assignments, observation forms, scales, and etc.”*

10% of the participants explained activities. Under this sub-theme they pointed out in-school and out-of school activities. Teacher I said that *“This curriculum has a great advantage for us: in-school and out-of school activities. I can say that this curriculum gave a great importance to activities. So we can do in-school activities by different teaching methods and educational technologies. Also we can do museum, historical and geographical sites trips, and local history studies in the context of out-of school activities.”*

8% of the participants indicated value and skill education. According to Teacher B, *“Students are perceived as a whole in modern education and they have to gain some knowledge, values and skills. In this context, 2005 curriculum took into account values and skills besides knowledge. In the curriculum guides, values and skills education are explained and some examples about how to teach them are introduced to teachers.”*

6% of the participants stressed the up-to-date information. Teacher H explained that *“I think another big advantage is the up-to-date information. As you know we are living in a global world. We have lots of facilities to reach information. Naturally this situation reflects on education and people lives. So my students can reach information very rapidly and they can know lots of things. With this curriculum, updated information has more taken place in social studies education. In this case, current events and global issues like newspaper, TV and internet news, bird flu, earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, and etc. started to appear in our curriculum and textbooks.”*

2% of the participants emphasized the roles of parents. In this context Teacher J said that *“With this curriculum, parents were involved in [their children’s] education. Thanks to assignments and e-school applications, parents have become more active in the process of education.”*

-Disadvantages of 2005 Social Studies Curriculum: Participants’ perceptions of the disadvantages of the 2005 social studies curriculum are introduced in Table 6. As can be understood from the table, 34.62% of participants complained about the lack of technological facilities, 30.77% indicated practice problems, 23.08% identified a lack of information about the curriculum, and 11.53% mentioned structural problems in the curriculum.

Table 6. Participants’ Perceptions about the Disadvantages of 2005 Social Studies Curriculum

Themes	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Lack of technological facilities	9	34.62
Practice problems	8	30.77
Lack of information about curriculum	6	23.08
Structural problems of curriculum	3	11.53
Total	26	100

34.62% of the participants complained about the lack of technological facilities. According to Teacher L, *“As you know, 2005 curriculum suggests using educational technologies. However every school in our country doesn’t have equal facilities. For example I’d like to use computer assisted learning but I haven’t done it yet, because my school doesn’t have these kind of facilities like computers, projectors and internet connection.”*

30.77% of the participants indicate practice problems. Teacher F claimed that *"I have difficulties in practice. For example there are lots of topics requiring to give projects and performance assignments in the curriculum. This creates an extra workload for me and I have to spend lots of time evaluating them and giving feedback."*

23.08% of the participants explained a lack of information about the curriculum. In this context they focused on inadequate or useless in-service education. For instance Teacher K informed that *"I have been teaching this curriculum for approximately 7 years. In this process curriculum suggests me to do apply modern methods and technologies, but it hasn't asked me if I am familiar with them or if I can use or apply them. To declare these deficiencies, I, and the teachers who think like me, wrote to officers to request more in-service education, but we haven't taken this kind of course yet."*

11.53% of the participants mentioned structural problems with the curriculum. They indicated sequences and intensity of content and inadequacy of time. In this context Teacher D said that *"To me, the main disadvantage is the sequence of content. As you know, an interdisciplinary approach was used in forming the content of the curriculum. Sometimes I can't understand which topic refers to which discipline. Also there is a gap between topics and it causes disconnection problems for the students, so they can't associate the related information and they can't understand the chronology."*

Social Studies Teachers' Perceptions about the Changes Occurred from 1998 to 2005 Social Studies Curriculum:

In this category, participants made demands about the things that were in 1998, but not in 2005 curriculum. Also, participants' suggested how to improve the quality of 2005 curriculum.

-Participants' Demands About The Things That Included in 1998 Social Studies Curriculum But Not Included In 2005 Social Studies Curriculum: As presented in the Table 7, 66.67% of the participants wanted more in-depth information about subject areas and the rest of the participants (33.33%) had no demands about what was in 1998, but not in 2005 curriculum.

Table 7. Participants' Perceptions about Things That Included in 1998 Social Studies Curriculum But Not Included in 2005 Social Studies Curriculum

Themes	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Deeply information about subject areas	8	66.67
No demands	4	33.33
Total	12	100

66.67% of the participants want more in-depth information about subject areas. In this case Teacher L explained that *"In our former curriculum, history and geography subjects, which were our major information resources, were handled in-detail, but in 2005 curriculum the intensity of these subjects was reduced and now they are superficially explained. So, history and geography subjects were not presented as deeply as they were in 1998 curriculum."*

33.33% of the participants did not think they should go back to the former curriculum, as teacher F said that *"I think the 2005 curriculum is a milestone for Turkish social studies education. With this curriculum we started to reach world standard, so we don't need to take anything from 1998 curriculum."*

- *Participants' Suggestions to Improve the Quality of 2005 Social Studies Curriculum:* Participants' suggestions for improving the quality of the 2005 curriculum are presented in Table 8. As can be seen, participants indicated that the following would be improvements: The addition of social studies laboratories (30%), in-service education (23.33%), technologic facilities (20%), preset educational materials (16.67%), and revisions in the content (10%) to improve the quality of the 2005 curriculum.

Table 8. Participants' Suggestions to Improve the Quality of 2005 Social Studies Curriculum

Themes	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Social studies laboratories	9	30.00
In-service education	7	23.33
Technologic facilities	6	20.00
Preset educational materials	5	16.67
Revision of content	3	10.00
Total	30	100

30% of the participants suggested building social studies laboratories to improve the quality of this curriculum. According to Teacher A, *"To improve the quality of curriculum, we have to teach in social studies laboratories. As you know social studies laboratories, including educational technologies, are the ideal environments to effectively teach-learn and support active learning. However due to the financial problems, generally our public schools don't have social studies laboratories. So we have to teach in technologically inadequate classrooms and this situation affects students' achievements and motivations negatively."*

23.33% of the participants recommended taking in-service education. Teacher G reported that *"As I said about the disadvantages, we need qualified in-service education about the curriculum, using teaching methods, educational technologies, and assessment-evaluation methods. This education must include both theory and practice, and each of methods, technologies or assessment-evaluation tools must introduce to teachers to how to use them, and must show teachers specific examples."*

20% of the participants advised strengthening technological facilities of schools. In this context Teacher H said that *"If we want to train active students and apply 2005 curriculum well, we have to do effective social studies teaching. One of the important elements of effective social studies teaching is using educational technologies. However as I know, our public schools have limited conditions in terms of educational technologies. So our ministry must support our schools in terms of technologic equipment to do better teaching."*

16.67% of the participants prescribed using preset educational materials. In other words teachers pointed out that educational materials, prepared by field experts or Ministry, should be sent to them for using in the courses. Teacher I explained that *"Actually, in my pre-service education, I took educational technologies and material development course to develop individual teaching-learning materials, but due to my over work load, economic problems, lack of information about how to develop modern materials, I couldn't prepare course materials. In order to solve these problems, our ministry should constitute some committees to develop educational materials then they should send them out to all of the public schools."*

10% of the participants suggested revising the content of the curriculum. Teacher L suggested that *"If authorities want teachers to apply social studies curriculum effectively, they must revise the content of the curriculum. In this case they must increase the portion of history and geography subjects in the curriculum. The connection among disciplines must be provided as well."*

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

Social studies has been taught in Turkey for years. In the last two decades, two important changes have been done in Turkish social studies education: 1998 social studies curriculum and 2005 social studies curriculum. In the 1998 social studies curriculum, social studies was handled with a holistic approach for 4th to 7th grades in primary schools. Then 2005 social studies curriculum was based on constructivist, interdisciplinary and thematic approaches influenced by the NCSS themes. Undoubtedly, these changes affected social studies teachers. Therefore, this study was an attempt to elicit social studies teacher perceptions' about the changes from the 1998 curriculum to the 2005 social studies curricula.

For this purpose, at the first stage, social studies teachers' perceptions about 1998 social studies curriculum were explored. Based on findings related to 1998 social studies curriculum, it is seen that majority of the participants accepted that social studies brought some innovations like handling of the course, grounded theory, designing approach and content. Participants explained some advantages such as detailed subjects, stress on democracy and including current events. These findings coincide with descriptions of 1998 social studies curriculum in the literature (Berk, 2008; Kavak, 2006; MONE, 1998; Sarıcan, 2006; Yıldız, 2008). In this case, it is possible to say that 1998 social studies curriculum brought some innovations by using behaviorism as a theoretical framework, designing social studies with holistic and multidisciplinary approaches, and including some different topics, and etc. Participants stressed some disadvantages of 1998 curriculum as well. As disadvantages they indicated its grounded theory (behaviorism), intensity of content, ignoring value and skills, inappropriate to use modern educational methods, educational technologies and modern assessment-evaluation methods. In the literature related studies (Akar, 2001; Anıl, 1999; Aynacı, 2001; Berk, 2008; Dönmez, 2003; Nalçacı, 2001; Pınarbaşı, 2007; Tümsek, 2006) remarked the same disadvantages about 1998 curriculum. So it is fair to say that, 1998 curriculum was really out of date and it needed to be reviewed for doing more contemporary social studies education.

At the second stage, participants' perceptions about 2005 social studies curriculum were handled as well. As some studies (Ata, 2010; Çalışkan, 2010; Kabapınar et al., 2008; Kaymakçı, 2009; MONE, 2005a; MONE, 2005b; MONE, 2005c; Öztürk & Dilek 2005; Yazıcı & Koca, 2008) emphasize, participants admitted that 2005 social studies curriculum brought some innovations and it has some advantages. Contrary to 1998 curriculum, all of the participants compromised that 2005 curriculum brought some innovations about the structure of the curriculum and pedagogy like education theory, objectives, content and organization. Also participants mentioned some advantages of curriculum such as student centered learning, teaching methods, educational technologies and materials, assessment and evaluation tools, activities, value and skill education, up-to-date information and roles of parents. When comparing the data with 1998 curriculum's innovations and advantages, it is clear to say that 2005 curriculum is more innovative and it has more advantages than 1998 curriculum. However 2005 curriculum has some disadvantages as well. In this context, participants complained about the lack of technological facilities, practice problems, lack of information about the curriculum and structural problems of curriculum. Participants' perceptions directly match with many related studies in the literature (Akdağ, 2008; Ataman, 2007; Ayva, 2008; Çalışkan, 2010; ERG, 2005; Gömleksiz & Bulut, 2006; Kalıpçı, 2008; Keleşoğlu, 2008; Okta, 2008; Pınarbaşı, 2007; Semenderoğlu & Gülersoy, 2005; Şimşek, 2009; Tümsek, 2006; Yaşar, 2005). From this point of view, it is easy to say that 2005 social studies curriculum has some disadvantages but indeed these disadvantages are less than the former one's.

At the last stage, participants' perceptions about the changing occurred from 1998 to 2005 social studies curriculum. From the findings, it is understood that majority of participants demand deeply information about subject areas. In other words, majority of participants implied that 1998 curriculum was sufficient enough to deeply teach history and geography. However they have some complaints about 2005 curriculum. As Akdağ (2008) stresses, social studies teachers confronted that 2005 curriculum doesn't give deeply historical and geographical knowledge and they want from authorities to be increased history and geography based topics in the curriculum. In this context, it is possible to say that social studies teachers want in depth historical and geographical subjects in the curriculum to do effective teaching and increase their students' achievements. Concerning suggestions to improve the quality of 2005 curriculum, they suggested constituting social studies laboratories and overcoming the deficiencies what they said about disadvantages of 2005 curriculum. In other words, they recommend taking qualified in-service education, improving technologic facilities of schools, using prepared educational materials and revising the content of 2005 curriculum. From this point of view, it is possible to say that majority of social studies teachers, who taught 1998 curriculum and has been teaching 2005 curriculum, satisfy with 2005 curriculum except for handling of historical and geographical subjects and they suggest some reforms and education to improve the quality of it.

Limitations:

This study has some limitations. The first limitation is related to sample size. So, it should be noted that due to the aim and nature of the study the sample size is not large enough to get more and different opinions about the changings brought by 1998 and 2005 social studies curricula. These findings could now be used for a survey research study to see if they hold true with a wider sample and across various school and geographic contexts in Turkey.

Suggestions:

The participants in the present study made suggestions for how the 2005 social studies curriculum could be revised to overcome the disadvantages they suggested and improve its quality. The participants thought that history and geography oriented subjects should be reconsidered and rate of these subjects in the curriculum should be increased. To inform teachers about the characteristics and nature of curriculum, qualified in-service education programs should be hold. In these programs theoretical aspects of the curriculum such as grounded theory, organization, learning thymes, objectives, skills and values should be informed in detail. Also practical aspects of the curriculum such as activities, educational technologies, modern pedagogical strategy, methods, techniques, assessment and evaluation tools should be presented by social studies field experts. These programs should include practices and show how to use these tools toward curriculum. Also to do effective education social studies laboratories, including educational technologies and materials, should be set up in each public school. Furthermore school facilities should be improved in terms of educational technology. Written and visual materials are should be prepared by material development committees and they should be sent out to all schools as well. For a further study, large-scale field studies, including problems of teachers about the theoretical and practical aspects of curriculum, subjects which are hard to learn, could be done all over the country and toward its results some policies could be prepared and implemented by the government.

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