

The Eurasia Proceedings of Educational & Social Sciences (EPESS), 2021

Volume 23, Pages 88-92

IconSE 2021: International Conference on Science and Education

Adequacy of the Social Studies Curriculum in terms of Cultural Literacy Skills

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Abstract: Being culturally literate means being prone and competent to be sensitive to one's own and others' identities, heritages, and cultures. It is very important for students to learn about other cultures and races in order to avoid unnecessary prejudices. In this sense, cultural literacy is a powerful educational tool used to adopt one's own culture and to develop understanding and respect for different cultures and people. Indeed, cultural literacy can be a window for other students to experience new ways of seeing the world as a rich and complex place. This study aims to reveal the adequacy of the Social Studies Curriculum updated in 2017 in terms of cultural literacy skills. The data of the research, which was carried out by adopting a qualitative research approach, were obtained through document analysis. The data obtained from the research were analyzed in accordance with the document review stages. In this context, seven learning areas within the Social Studies Curriculum were examined in detail.

Keywords: Social studies, Curriculum, Cultural literacy

Introduction

Subdivide Culture is often described as an iceberg. Above the water, there are aspects of culture that you can easily see and experience: such as language, clothes, food, festivals. Under the water, in places where we cannot see it, there are aspects that those who live the culture know and understand most of the time without thinking or questioning (Hirsch, 1983). Thus, culture is not just a set of beliefs and values that make up our normal, everyday worldview; it also includes our standard daily behavior patterns (Heller, 1987). Cultural literacy, on the other hand, is the information network that all readers have. However, cultural literacy can mean the ability to understand and interpret the characteristics of a culture in terms of social organization, legal systems, religious beliefs, and related topics that social science focuses on (Broudy, 1990; Hirsch, Kett & Trefil, 1987). The aim of cultural literacy is to equip students and professionals with the ability to read and understand constantly evolving cultural and disciplinary contexts so that they can adapt to cultures in such a way that their specific education can be applied as effortlessly and efficiently as possible (Ochoa, McDonald & Monk, 2016). In this context, Anning (2010) summarizes the basic competencies that one should develop to be culturally literate:

- Appreciating and understanding cultural diversity,
- Effective communication with people from other cultures,
- Treating everyone without prejudices or stereotypes,
- Evaluating each situation and adjusting one's behavior.

The balance of skills and factual information is important for cultural literacy. Teaching skills in context and combining critical thinking with content is particularly important in education. Being literate about culture, however, requires more than knowledge and skills in the humanities and other sciences: It requires the ability to critically evaluate popular culture. Because gaining knowledge about how to behave in a cultural setting

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involves learning a complex set of values and beliefs (Riecken & Court, 1992). Rosen (2000) stated that with cultural literacy, differences can be grasped and benefited from, which can enable a person to fulfill the following key roles:

- Values one's cultural heritage, shortcomings, and strengths,
- An investigative internationalist who looks beyond his own culture for job opportunities,
- A respectful modernist who best preserves his culture and uses the knowledge and resources of others,
- Cultural bridge building cross-cultural alliances and coalitions,
- It is the global capitalist who brings global resources to local problems and local resources to global opportunities.

There is general agreement that living and working in culturally diverse environments offers educators and institutions at all levels the essential task of promoting and developing cultural literacy (Shliakhovchuk, 2021). The main principles underlying the recommendations for using cultural literacy, which is accepted as a way to achieve excellence in education, can best be summarized as follows: Cultural literacy (Hirsch, 1985, 1987);

- It should be an essential component of the entire school curriculum,
- It is necessary to achieve general literacy,
- It should start in the primary school grades at the earliest,
- It is necessary for all children, regardless of socio-economic status, ethnicity, or type of school,
- It is a path to academic success and therefore will break the cycle of poverty and benefit at-risk illiterate students.

Social studies are an important primary education course that examines people and their interaction with their environment in terms of time and place (Doğanay, 2008). The main purpose of Social Studies is to assist young people to develop the ability to make informed, rational decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse democratic society in an interdependent, global world (NCSS, 1993). In Turkey, the 2017 Social Studies Curriculum includes cultural issues as in previous programs. The aim of this research is to reveal the adequacy of the Social Studies Curriculum updated in 2017 in terms of cultural literacy skills. In line with this general purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What is the adequacy of the 4th Grade Social Studies Program in terms of cultural literacy skills?
2. What is the adequacy of the 5th Grade Social Studies Program in terms of cultural literacy skills?
3. What is the adequacy of the 6th Grade Social Studies Program in terms of cultural literacy skills?
4. What is the adequacy of the 7th Grade Social Studies Program in terms of cultural literacy skills?

Method

The research is a descriptive study in the screening model based on the qualitative research approach. In this study, document analysis, one of the qualitative data collection tools, was used. Document analysis includes the analysis of written materials containing information about the facts and events that are aimed to be investigated (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The main source of the research data is the 2017 Social Studies Curriculum on the website of the Ministry of National Education Board of Education and Discipline. The data were subjected to document analysis. The analysis was carried out in five stages. These are: Accessing documents, checking originality, understanding documents, analyzing data, and finally using data.

Findings

In this section, it is examined how much the Social Studies Curriculum touches on cultural literacy skills and the results are presented through tables.

Cultural Literacy in Social Studies 4th Grade Program

The data on the cultural literacy skills of the 4th grade Social Studies program are given in Table 1. As seen in Table 1, subjects and achievements covering cultural literacy in the learning areas of Individual and Society,

Culture and Heritage, Science, Technology and Society and Global Connections are included in the 4th Grade Social Studies Program. There are 33 outcomes in total in the 4th grade Social Studies program. The program includes content that will directly improve cultural literacy skills in 6 outcomes. This content was given more place in the learning areas of Culture and Heritage and Global Connections.

Table 1. Cultural literacy skills in Social Studies 4th grade program (MEB, 2018)

4th Grade Social Studies Program		
Learning Space	Topic	Program Outcomes
Individual and Society	I am aware, I respect differences	SB.4.1.5. Respects the different characteristics of other individuals.
Culture and Heritage	1. Our National Cultural Elements	SB.4.2.2. Gives examples by researching the elements reflecting the national culture in and around his family.
	2. Kids Games from Past to Present	SB.4.2.3. Compares traditional children's games with today's games in terms of change and continuity.
Science, Technology and Society	Technology from the Past to the Present	SB.4.4.2. Compares the past and present uses of technological products.
Global Connections	1. Different cultures	SB.4.7.3. Compares the cultural elements of different countries with the cultural elements of our country.
	2. The World is Beautiful with Differences	SB.4.7.4. Respects different cultures.

Cultural Literacy in Social Studies 5th Grade Program

Data on cultural literacy skills in the Social Studies 5th grade program are given in Table 2. As can be seen in Table 2, subjects and achievements related to cultural literacy skills are included in the learning areas of Culture and Heritage, Production, Distribution, Consumption and Global Connections in the 5th Grade Social Studies Program. There are 33 gains in total in the 5th grade Social Studies program. In the program, on the other hand, there are contents that will directly improve cultural literacy skills in 9 outcomes. In the outcomes in the field of Culture and Heritage learning, this content was given more space than the specified learning areas.

Table 2. Cultural literacy skills in Social Studies 5th grade program (MEB, 2018)

5th Grade Social Studies Program		
Learning Space	Topic	Program Outcomes
Culture and Heritage		SB.5.2.1. Realizes the important contributions of Anatolian and Mesopotamian civilizations to the history of humanity based on their concrete remains.
	1. We Know Civilizations	SB.5.2.2. It introduces the natural assets and historical places, objects and artifacts around.
	2. Beauties of Our Country	SB.5.2.3. By comparing the cultural characteristics of various parts of our country with the cultural characteristics of the environment in which he lives, he determines the similar and different elements between them.
	3. Our Rich Culture	SB.5.2.4. Analyzes the role of cultural elements in the coexistence of people.
	4. Our Shared Values	SB.5.2.5. Evaluates the historical development of cultural elements in daily life.
	5. Our Culture from Past to Present	SB.5.5.3. Analyzes the effect of economic activities in the environment on people's social lives.
Production, Distribution, Consumption	Economic Activities and Social Life	SB.5.7.1. Researches the role of the place where he lives and his environment in the economic relations between our country and other countries.
Global Connections	1. Our Contribution to the Economy	SB.5.7.3. Explain the importance of tourism in international relations.
	2. Journey to Peace	SB.5.7.4. Gives examples of common heritage items found in various countries.
	3. A Gift from the Past to the Future: Common Heritage	

Cultural Literacy in Social Studies 6th Grade Program

Data on cultural literacy skills in the 6th grade Social Studies program are given in Table 3. As seen in Table 3, subjects and achievements related to cultural literacy are included in the Learning areas of Individual and Society, Culture and Heritage and Global Connections in the 6th Grade Social Studies Program. There are 34 outcomes in total in the 6th grade Social Studies program. In the program, on the other hand, there are contents that will directly improve cultural literacy skills in 9 outcomes. In the outcomes in the field of Culture and Heritage learning, this content was given more space than the specified learning areas.

Table 3. Cultural literacy skills in Social Studies 6th grade program (MEB, 2018)

6th Grade Social Studies Program		
Learning Space	Topic	Program Outcomes
Individual and Society	1. Culture and Social Cohesion	SB.6.1.2. Analyzes the place and role of social, cultural and historical ties in the formation of social cohesion.
	2. I Respect Diversity	SB.6.1.3. Question the prejudices against differences in order to live in harmony in society.
Culture and Heritage	1. The First Turkish States Established in Central Asia	SB.6.2.1. He makes inferences about the geographical, political, economic and cultural characteristics of the first Turkish states established in Central Asia.
	2. Acceptance of Islam by Turks	SB.6.2.3. He realizes the changes in the political, social and cultural fields with the acceptance of Islam by the Turks.
	3. New Home Anatolia	SB.6.2.4. The process of Turks acquiring Anatolia in the XI. and XIII. analyzes in the context of centuries.
	4. Silk and Spice Road	SB.6.2.5. Explain the role of historical trade routes in political, cultural and economic relations between societies.
Global Connections	1. Relations with Turkic Republics and Neighboring Countries	SB.6.7.1. Analyzes the cultural, social, political and economic relations of our country with the Turkic Republics and neighboring states.
	2. International Roles Assumed by Our Country	SB.6.7.3. Analyzes the roles our country has assumed in the international arena depending on its political, military, economic and cultural characteristics.
	3. Popular culture	SB.6.7.4. Question the effects of popular culture on our culture.

Cultural Literacy in Social Studies 7th Grade Program

Table 4 shows the data regarding the adequacy of cultural literacy skills in the 7th grade Social Studies program. As seen in the table, subjects and achievements related to cultural literacy are included in the 7th Grade Social Studies Program in the learning areas of Culture and Heritage and Global Connections. There are 31 outcomes in total in the 7th grade Social Studies program. In the program, on the other hand, there are contents that will directly improve cultural literacy skills in 2 outcomes.

Table 4. Cultural literacy skills in Social Studies 7th grade program (MEB, 2018)

7th Grade Social Studies Program		
Learning Space	Topic	Program Outcomes
Culture and Heritage	I Exist with My Culture	SB.7.2.5. Gives examples of Ottoman culture, art and aesthetics.
	Facts We Know Wrong	SB.7.7.3. Question the stereotypes of various cultures.

Conclusion

When social studies 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grades are examined, there are 131 outcomes in total. It is seen that a total of 26 acquisitions at the level of all classes are directly related to cultural literacy skills. When evaluated in general, considering that there are seven learning areas in the Social Studies program updated in 2017, it is seen

that five of these (Individual and Society, Culture and Heritage, Science, Technology and Society, Production, Distribution, Consumption, Global Connections) learning areas directly or indirectly try to gain cultural literacy skills. It has been determined that cultural elements are concentrated in the learning areas of "Culture and Heritage" and "Global Connections" within the determined learning areas. Many subjects and concepts that form the basis of cultural literacy skills are included in the program. However, in order to increase students' cultural awareness, it can be suggested that the distribution of cultural elements in other learning areas should be balanced, and these elements should be included in more outcomes.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

The author declares that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the author.

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To cite this article:

Eguz, S. (2021). Adequacy of the social studies curriculum in terms of cultural literacy skills. *The Eurasia Proceedings of Educational and Social Sciences*, 23, 88-92.