



## A Systematic Literature Review on Curriculum Studies Addressing Social Inequalities\*

### Toplumsal Eşitsizlikleri Ele Alan Program Çalışmalarına İlişkin Sistemik Alanyazın Taraması

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**ABSTRACT:** This research aims to reveal trends on social inequality in curriculum studies based on the studies carried out between 2014-2019 in the international literature. For this purpose, a systematic literature review was carried out. Some criteria have been specified for the systematic literature review to determine the journals and articles to be analyzed within the research purpose and questions. In line with the determined criteria, the Scopus database was searched, and 262 curriculum studies reached as a result of the scanning were examined within the scope of addressing social inequalities. A detailed analysis was carried out on 63 studies included in terms of the data source, the design, which inequality and curriculum dimension the studies focused on, and their purposes. Descriptive and interpretive codes coded the remaining data on the text document. As a result of the research, the social inequality and curriculum dimensions addressed in the studies, the purpose of addressing those and the data sources and research designs used to reflect social inequalities were presented.

**Keywords:** Curriculum studies, social inequality, reconceptualization, systematic literature review.

**ÖZ:** Bu araştırma, uluslararası alanyazında, 2014-2019 yılları arasında gerçekleştirilen çalışmalara dayalı olarak program çalışmalarında sosyal eşitsizlik konusundaki araştırma eğilimlerini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda sistemik alanyazın taraması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Sistemik alanyazın taraması için araştırma amacı ve soruları kapsamında analiz edilecek dergi ve makalelerin belirlenmesi için birtakım ölçütler belirlenmiştir. Belirlenen ölçütler doğrultusunda Scopus veri tabanında tarama gerçekleştirilmiş ve tarama sonucunda ulaşılan 262 program çalışması toplumsal eşitsizlikleri ele alması kapsamında incelenmiştir. İnceleme sonucunda araştırmanın kapsamına giren 63 çalışma ile Excel üzerinden çalışmaların hedef kitle, desen, hangi eşitsizlik ve program boyutuna odaklandığı ile amaçları hakkında detaylı bir analiz gerçekleştirilmiştir. Hedef kitle ve desene yönelik sıklık analizi gerçekleştirilmiştir. Kalan veriler ise metin belgesi üzerinde betimsel ve yorumlayıcı kodlar aracılığıyla kodlanmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda uluslararası alanyazında yer alan program çalışmalarda ele alınan sosyal eşitsizlik ve program boyutları, bu boyutların ele alınma amacı ve sosyal eşitsizlikleri yansıtmak için kullanılan veri kaynakları ile araştırma desenleri sunulmuştur.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Program çalışmaları, toplumsal eşitsizlik, yeniden kavramsallaştırma, sistemik alanyazın taraması.

\* The manuscript was started within the scope of the graduate seminar course and was completed afterward.

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Social inequality is when individuals do not have equal access to valuable resources, services and societal positions (Kerbo, 2003). This situation reveals itself in different dimensions, such as income, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and race (Hurst et al., 2016). An example is the income distribution gap between individuals top 10 percent and the bottom 50 percent in different countries. According to the World Inequality Database, the world average is 52.4 for the top 10% and 8.5% for the bottom 50%. Specifically, the upper part of the income distribution accounts for 54.4%, while the lower part makes up only 11.9% in Turkey. That means the average income of those in the lower tier is €6,23, while those in the upper tier are €141,934. Likely in Brazil, the upper part of the income distribution accounts for 59.8%, while the lower part makes up only 9.8%. (World Inequality Database, 2021). It shows that an unequal distribution is available.

When inequalities are analyzed based on sociological theories, classical theories such as Marxism, Conflict Theory, and Functionalism mainly emphasize inequalities based on class and capital. According to all these theories, inequalities are necessary for social peace or a problem that must be solved. However, contemporary theories argue that social classes are no longer an important indicator, and inequalities change their shape from production to consumption (Yanıklar, 2010). Bourdieu, as one of the contemporary theorists, has emphasized that inequalities can occur not only economically but also socially, culturally, and symbolically. Therefore, education as a construct plays an essential role in maintaining and reproducing inequalities and providing social mobility because individuals can progress upwards in society with their education. However, reproduction also comes into play at this point. Progress in social mobility will vary according to the person's starting position in society (Önür, 2013). Their social class, gender, religion, race, and ethnic origins will also differentiate the point they can reach through education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2019).

Education systems differ in each country. In addition to the countries that try to include everyone in education, there are also countries where private institutions are prevalent. These private institutions transform equality into inequality of opportunity for those who start their education in different class positions (Shields, 2018). That means the quality of education is different for everyone. Moreover, exams held to place students at certain levels in education systems reinforce inequalities. While students from families with a high socio-economic status are more successful in these exams, students with a middle or lower socio-economic status may be less successful (Marger, 2013; OECD, 2019; Thomson, 2018). It also causes different learning-related behavior problems (Morgan et al., 2009). The reasons for the success of higher-income students might be good academic preparation, family support, and higher education expectation of the students (Çelikkol & Avcı, 2017). According to Jacobs and Wolbers (2018), the United States and Germany had almost the same relatively high percentage of top-performing students reading from low-SES backgrounds. In contrast, in Germany, the corresponding rate of top performers within the group of students with high parental SES was much higher than in the former. The big picture shows that students with low socio-economic status are less frequently top performers in the exams, and this is because of an unequal distribution of parental resources.

Career paths will also change according to the education received and the individual's social position. For instance, the net enrollment rate adjusted for education level and gender was examined. For women, this rate is 28.8 for preschool, 96.3% for primary school, 95.9% for secondary school, and 87.8% for higher school in Turkey. This rate is always 1 or 2%

higher in men (TUIK, 2021). The difference by years is noteworthy when the higher education enrollment rates were examined. While the number of newly enrolled female students in Turkey in 2013 was 583,909, the number of female students enrolled in universities in 2019 was 782,365 (Yükseköğretim Bilgi Yönetim Sistemi, 2014; 2020). Moreover, the education system directs women to several limited professional fields. While the number of male administrators employed in the first month of 2020 was 1,273, the number of female administrators was 274 in Turkey (Yükseköğretim Bilgi Yönetim Sistemi, 2020). From this point of view, it is seen that women often do not get the reward of their education in their workplaces (Sernau, 2011).

The curriculum also ensures social mobility or reproduces inequality in education systems. According to reproduction theories, inequalities are reproduced intensively through the hidden curriculum (Giroux, 1983). According to Bourdieu and Passeron (2019), education is an institution that separates and classifies individuals according to their cultural capital. Cultural capital, which means social assets that contribute to the cultural value, such as education, ideas, practices, beliefs, style of speech, and style of dress (Throsby, 1999), is hidden in the curriculum and teaching process organized by some dominant groups (Rawolle & Lingard, 2018). In the study conducted by Willis (1981), it was revealed that the hidden curriculum plays a role in reproducing social classes in schools.

Similarly, according to another study conducted in England, the deprivations experienced by students in society are reproduced in the classroom environment. This reproduction is carried out through a hidden curriculum that tries to make students accept the inequality in the community, think that it is inevitable, and internalize their positions (Turner, 1997). Apple (1990) also argues that reproduction occurs with the hidden curriculum. According to him, schools not only educate students but also organize knowledge. The distribution of the knowledge conveyed through the curriculum at the school varies according to the target audience. Certain groups may have access to specific knowledge, while others may not have access to the same knowledge.

For this reason, Apple argues that the knowledge contained in the curriculum is not neutral. This is also related to the answer to “which knowledge is valuable.” The curriculum only includes knowledge regarded as ‘valuable’ or ‘important.’ However, the dominant ideologies determine to whom and according to which situation this knowledge is valuable/important. According to Bernstein (1971), “How a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the academic knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principles of social control (p. 47). Bernstein also argues that more time is devoted to some content; some are optional, while others are compulsory. From a different perspective, some students' social, economic, and cultural profiles may not be compatible with the school. However, with the pedagogy and curriculum that regulate the routine at school, students see themselves as the source of their failures. This is done through the hidden curriculum (Apple, 2013). Keddie (1971) takes this point from the perspectives of teachers. He states that teachers differentiate in selecting content and pedagogy between pupils perceived as having the high and low ability. The system in which it is involved and the ideologies that shape the society lead the development of the curriculum. This shows that the truth of individuals or groups with power and status in the community is valid in decision-making processes.

These inequalities, which emerge in different ways and at other times in social life, consist of different dimensions such as ethnicity/race, gender, religion, social class, and special needs. There have been a variety of fields studying inequalities over the years, including sociology and psychology for gender inequalities (Brandt, 2011; Davis & Robinson, 1991); health and education for social class inequalities (Holstein et al., 2009; O'Connell et al., 2006); social services, public administration, and history for ethnic/racial inequalities (Andrews, 1992; Ayón, 2016); philosophy, business and psychology for religious inequalities (Ghumman et al., 2013; Nelson et al., 2012). In particular, thanks to the study carried out by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, inequalities were handled with the concept of "intersectionality" and started to be examined multi-dimensionally.

When the international literature is reviewed, it is seen that social inequalities in the studies conducted in the curriculum field are based on ethnicity/race (Arday et al., 2021); ethnicity/race and gender (Snapp et al., 2015), ethnicity/race and social class (Klugman, 2013; Whigman et al., 2020), religion (Felderhof, 2005), gender and social class (Iannelli, 2013), gender, ethnicity/race, religion and social class (Kheiltash & Rust, 2009; Moeller, 2021). In the national literature, there have been various studies on social inequalities from different perspectives, such as multiculturalism, migration, social classes in religion (Çekin, 2013; Tosun et al., 2018), educational administration (Atmaca, 2019; Atmaca & Aydin, 2020; Göktürk & Ađın, 2020; Kaştan & Bozan, 2016), adult education (Uysal et al., 2016), economics and administrative sciences, social services (Gencer & Kelebek, 2008), political science and public administration (Özcan, 2018), sociology (Sever, 2020) and psychology (Gümüştın, 2017). However, the scope of the studies carried out in the field of the curriculum is quite limited. In these studies, inequalities were mostly addressed based on gender and social class (Çiftçi & Cin, 2017; Gözütok & Acar-Erdol, 2017; Karakuş et al., 2018; Saldıray & Dođanay, 2017; Seçgin & Kurnaz, 2015; Yolcu et al., 2017). It is seen that studies have been carried out to examine the textbooks, especially revealing how gender-based inequalities are reflected (Akay-Şahin & Açıkalin, 2021; Esen, 2007; Esen & Bağlı, 2002; Güneş, 2008; Kasa & Şahan, 2016; Kükrer & Kıbrıs, 2017; Gümüšođlu, 2008; Kalaycı & Hayırsever, 2014; Kılıç & Eyüp, 2011; Tezer-Asan, 2010). Some other studies are trying to reveal social inequalities, human rights problems and the required knowledge, skills and attitudes to solve these problems (Akın et al., 2017; Bağlı, 2013; Çayır & Bağlı, 2011; Esen, 2013). While the number of studies is regarded as enough, their scope is limited to a few dimensions.

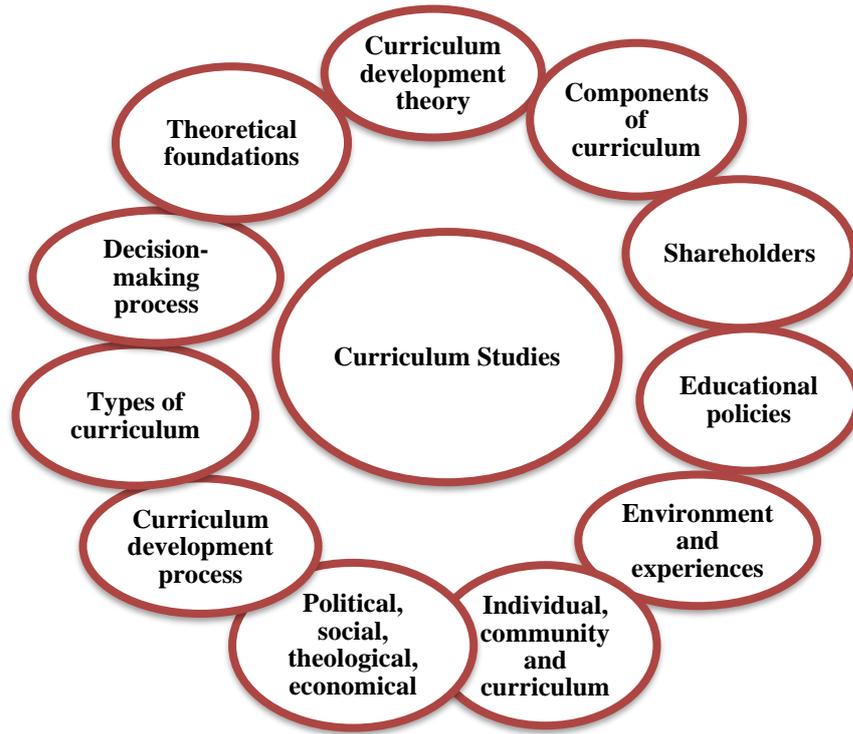
It is seen that although there are some studies in the fields of sociology of education and educational administration, social inequalities in Turkey are adopted as a field of study by political scientists, lawyers and sociologists rather than educational scientists (Bümen & Aktan, 2014). This situation was also demonstrated in the study conducted by Sert et al. (2018). This study has stated that the curriculum evokes the learning-teaching process, and its scope is not fully understood. Also, although the field's scope is broad, curriculum development experts perceive their areas of interest are very narrow. The fact that the information flow is very fast in the information society we live in makes it necessary to keep the scope and depth of the studies constantly up to date. A similar situation applies to the curriculum development process as well. "What kind of individual do we want to raise?" The answer to the question constantly changes day by day. For this reason, the scope of the curriculum studies should be considered in a broader sense.

According to the standard description, a curriculum is a planned or unplanned learning experience inside or outside the school. This view is based on the “traditional curriculum development approach” (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018) or “curriculum development paradigm” that emerged thanks to Tyler, Bobbitt, and Charters. However, according to Pinar (2004), who based his views on the paradigm of “understanding the curriculum,” the curriculum development paradigm shows the curriculum as a passive structure. On the contrary, what students experience or learn in the learning environment cannot be explained in a simple form. Social, cultural, economic or political forces influence their learning and experiences. Knowledge, skills, social codes and values are transferred to students through curriculum, and these are not clearly defined and open to discussion because there is no common idea about what, how, and why students should learn.

Along with this paradigm shift, the work of experts, the scope of the courses, and the discussions about the concepts and curriculum have also changed (Pinar, 2010). For instance, in the curriculum implemented in Turkey in 2018, there is a statement, “while the curriculum is being implemented, care should be taken to ensure that the students acquire values; all objectives should be matched with the relevant values, and these lessons should be taught based on the hidden curriculum,” and the whole process is left to the discretion of teachers (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2018). However, a framework is still presented. That is why discussing the curriculum from the traditional perspective is getting harder and harder. Curriculum studies should cover many dimensions regarding the effects on learning-teaching environments, the decision-making processes of educators/experts, and the learners’ lives. These studies must also deal with the political, social, cultural, and economic forces that affect the experiences of learners and educators (Gobby, 2017).

According to Pinar (2004), curriculum theory aims to understand the importance of curriculum by focusing on interdisciplinary themes such as gender, multiculturalism, or ecological crisis and the relationships between the curriculum, the individual, community, and history. This field is far from passivity, focused on analysis/understanding and change. In line with the words of Pinar, Bateman (1974) stated that schooling was not neutral, and neither was its curriculum. The idea of curriculum reform must also be “demythologized” if it wants to contribute to people’s liberation. Greene (1974) also said that a curriculum must let students see that “they themselves, whoever they are, constitute those worlds as self-determining human beings existing with others in the intersubjective community” (p. 69). Considering all these, the scope of the curriculum studies was determined by blending traditional and critical perspectives in this research. From this point of view, the scope of the curriculum studies is presented in Figure 1. All dimensions are in interaction with one another.

Figure 1  
Scope of Curriculum Studies



It is seen that the current trend is followed in the studies conducted in the international literature. These studies focus on the effects of the management style, the political agenda, migration, social justice, democracy education, environmental education, racial and sexual equality, critical pedagogy, and cybernetics. Also, the curriculum is analyzed as a political, aesthetic, phenomenological, historical, and sociological text. However, studies conducted in Turkey are limited to topics such as globalization and secularism, as was supported in the study of Ataş et al. (2021). Although studies on migration, multiculturalism, bilingualism, and refugees in the curriculum field have been carried out in recent years (Akhan & Yalçın, 2016; Başbay & Bektaş, 2009; Baysu & Ağırdağ, 2019; Cırıt-Karaağaç & Güvenç, 2019; Polat & Kılıç, 2013; Özen & Dağyar, 2020; Özenç & Saat, 2019; Sarier, 2020; Seban & Uyanık, 2016), curriculum studies in which social inequalities are generally discussed have not been able to move away from one-dimensionality. In the study conducted by Sever et al. (2019), it was revealed that the specification of research topics in the curriculum field remained ambiguous and limited due to the concern that they overlap with the research interests of other disciplines. It was also stated that the content of the courses in the Curriculum and Instruction of master's or doctoral programs do not include current trends in the field. As Bümen (2020) stated, it can be said that there is no country-specific paradigm in Turkey, although there is an Anglo-American-based curriculum understanding. In addition, experts do not handle this situation, and its reasons are not questioned. New perspectives are needed to progress, be a pioneer in responding to social needs, and provide different research interests in the field. Based on this requirement, the general purpose of this research is to reveal the research trends on social inequality in curriculum studies based on the studies carried out between 2014-2019 in the international literature. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

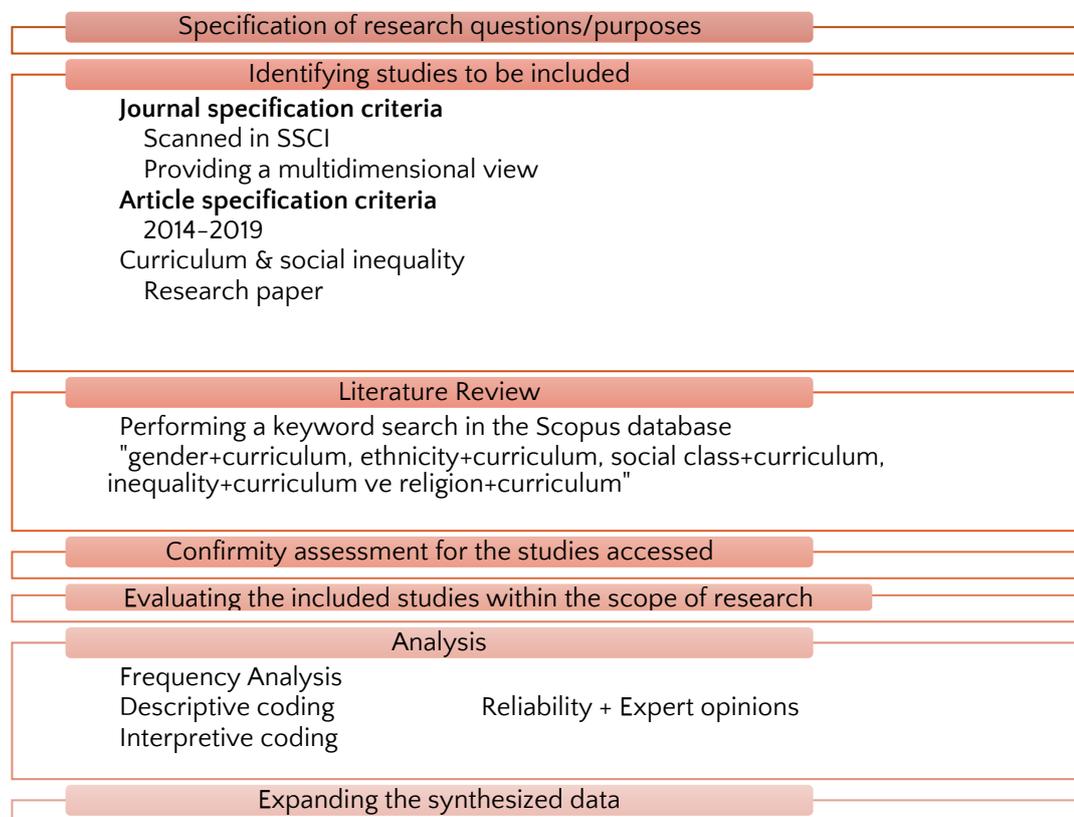
1. What dimensions of curriculum and social inequalities have been addressed in the curriculum studies, and do these dimensions show a change over the years?
2. For what purpose have social inequalities been addressed in the curriculum studies?
3. Which research designs and data sources are preferred/used to reflect social inequalities in the studies?

### Method

This research used the systematic literature review to determine research trends on social inequalities in curriculum studies. A systematic literature review is the finding, selection, and synthesis of the studies put forward for a specific question by following a systematic, transparent and repeatable process (Littell et al., 2008). In this way, it is aimed to limit systematic error (bias) (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). A systematic literature review is also necessary to identify ambiguous points in an area, identify studies on a topic, and show where new studies are needed (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006). For a literature review to be systematic, it should consist of clearly and comprehensibly defined questions, determine the relevant studies based on these questions, critically evaluate the identified studies, and summarize the data obtained from the studies with an explicit method (Khan et al., 2003). The stages in Figure 2 were carried out in this research following the systematic literature review requirements.

Figure 2

#### Research Process



### Data Collection

Social inequalities, which is a subject that cannot be fully resolved internationally and nationally, and how social inequalities are handled in curriculum studies are the main concerns of the study. With this focus in mind, questions were formed regarding the general characteristics of the research (design, data source, dimensions considered) and the purpose of addressing the topic. The criteria for the journals included in the study were determined, and a search was done.

### Journal Specification Criteria and Specified Journals

- \* The journals scanned in SSCI (for international recognition)
- \* Journals handling social inequalities in curriculum studies multidimensionally and reflecting the general trend (gender, class, ethnicity/race and religion)
- \* According to the Journal Specification Criteria, ten journals were specified: “Curriculum Inquiry; Curriculum Matters; Journal of Curriculum Studies; Language, Culture and Curriculum; Critical Studies in Education; Education as Change; Gender and Education; Race, Ethnicity and Education; Sociology of Education and Educational Studies.” Next, these journals were re-examined in terms of the articles they published. As a result of the re-examination, “Curriculum Matters; Language, Culture and Curriculum; Education as Change; Gender and Education; Race, Ethnicity and Education and Educational Studies” were not included in the study for some reasons. These are “emphasizing local issues rather than reflecting the general trend, not starting their publication life within the years specified in the study, dealing with inequalities not addressed within the scope of curriculum studies, and inequalities focused on only one dimension (only gender or ethnicity/race). Therefore, the study was based on four journals: “Curriculum Inquiry, Journal of Curriculum Studies, Critical Studies in Education and Sociology of Education.” These journals are generally in the first and second quartiles, and the impact factors also vary between 1.0 and 3.5. After the journals were determined, the article selection criteria were decided.

### Article Selection Criteria

- \* **The time interval of the studies to be included in the review (2014-2019):** Education for All (UNESCO Education for All): In the Education for All program, initiated by UNESCO in 1990, some targets to be achieved by 2015 on primary education, adult literacy, gender inequality, disadvantaged groups and quality problems in education were set (Herkes için Eğitim - Education for All, n.d.). Whether these goals have been achieved or not can be reflected through studies. For this reason, some of these problems within the scope of social inequalities are discussed based on the determined time interval.
- \* The time interval has been limited to five years to include the current studies.
- \* **Curriculum studies addressing social inequalities:** Social inequalities are limited to social class, gender, ethnicity/race and religion. “Having special needs” was omitted in the study because it is a separate field and requires extra knowledge. Keywords are also determined based on this limitation. (02.12.2019-30.01.2020)
- \* The study should not be a thesis, report, meta-analysis or review article.

After specifying the criteria for article selection, a search was done with keywords.

Since the study was limited to the journals scanned in the international index, the keywords were “gender+curriculum, ethnicity+curriculum, social class+curriculum, inequality+curriculum and religion+curriculum.” The search was carried out on the Scopus database. According to the developers of the Scopus database, it indexes more than 14,000 social science titles from 4,000 publishers and is the largest indexing database ever made (Burnham, 2006). As a result of the search with keywords, 262 articles were accessed and saved. (29.01.2020-30.01.2020).

### **Data Analysis**

The studies accessed were discussed one by one in terms of suitability. First, the studies' title, keywords, abstract, introduction, and conclusion sections were examined. If the study was not eliminated, it was thoroughly read. The studies to be included in the research were determined in this way. As a result of the review, 84 studies were considered suitable for analysis. The remaining 178 studies were eliminated. Studies are generally eliminated because they are reports/reviews, not conducted to address social inequalities, and not within the scope of curriculum studies. In some studies, social inequalities were only included in the findings or conclusion sections. However, these studies were eliminated in such cases since their primary purpose was not to address social inequalities. A document has been prepared explaining why these studies were eliminated. This way, information about the studies could be reached quickly when needed.

Studies included in the research were determined and recorded via the Excel program. In addition, the identifiers of the studies (author, title, journal, year, volume, issue, pages, link) and how these studies were accessed were also stated. The recorded data were written into tables in the program, and filtering was used during the analysis. In this way, collection and analysis processes are systematized. In addition, notes were taken about the studies. Frequency analysis was carried out by counting the data recorded in the Excel file to determine the data sources and design. The inequality dimensions discussed in the studies were determined, frequency analysis was performed, and the data were graphed to reveal whether social inequalities have changed over the years. The remaining data was transferred to a text document and coded. In coding, the inequality and curriculum dimensions and the studies' purpose of dealing with inequalities were coded through descriptive and interpretive codes. Social inequalities sought within the curriculum studies (ethnicity/race, gender, religion, and social class) were defined as “pre-code.” The inequality and curriculum dimensions discussed in the studies were coded within descriptive coding. After the descriptive coding, the data were re-read, and interpretive coding was carried out.

On the other hand, interpretive coding was done to see what meaning should be inferred from the data when the data is analyzed through a holistic view. Thus, it has been tried to provide an overview of the purpose of addressing inequalities in the studies. While going through interpretative coding, the data was always put as the focus point, and the whole research was considered. An example of the final version of the coding process is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1  
*An Example of Coding*

Example 1	<p>Ethnicity/race: Whites, Mixed Race and Blacks- Examining how the bullying prevention curriculum is implemented in a school context in terms of critical whiteness studies and the hidden curriculum in a racist country.</p> <p>Descriptive code: RACE: Whites, Mixed Race and Blacks – bullying prevention curriculum – hidden curriculum</p> <p>Interpretative code: Revealing hidden and dominant discourses in the curriculum</p>
Example 2	<p>Ethnicity/race, gender and class- Examining the suitability of the black feminism approach to curriculum development theory to disrupt the dominant hierarchy of “White, male, Western Europe, American and elite” in the curriculum field and emphasizing the inequalities arising from this hierarchy with the story, Girl, in the curriculum.</p> <p>Descriptive code: RACE: White, Western Europe, American, Black people – SEX: Men, Women – CLA: working-class – Curriculum development theory- content</p> <p>Interpretive code: Presenting an alternative to the dominant theoretical view that perpetuates inequalities in the curriculum field.</p>

Afterward, two rounds of reliability analysis were carried out among the researchers to determine the suitability of the codes (Krippendorff, 2009). As a result of the first round, researchers concluded that descriptive codes should be defined to show which dimension of the curriculum studies and which inequality dimensions are addressed. Also, the interpretative codes should be determined to develop an overview of the purpose of addressing inequalities. As a result of the second round, it was decided to eliminate 21 studies. These studies were eliminated because the main emphasis is on inequalities while the focus on curriculum remains in the background. In addition, the opinions of teachers and families, schooling, and laws are the primary topic in studies, and some studies are related to educational administration. As a result, it was decided to include 63 studies in the analysis. Information on the included studies is presented in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Distribution of Included Studies by Journal and Year*

Journals	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Total
Curriculum Inquiry	3	4	4	1	10	4	26
Journal of Curriculum Studies	3	3	4	2	6	3	21
Sociology of Education	1	2	1	1	-	1	6
Critical Studies in Education	1	1	1	1	2	4	10
Total	8	10	10	5	18	12	63

As a result of the reliability analysis, inequality dimensions, curriculum dimensions, and purposes were coded. After coding, expert opinions were used to ensure the validity and reliability of the coding. First, an expert evaluation form was created explaining the purpose of the study and what is expected from the experts. The document was sent to three experts

via e-mail. Since the study has a sociological perspective, an expert working in the Department of Sociology at a state university was asked for her opinions. In addition, two experts working in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at a state university were asked for their opinions. While one expert evaluated the coding process for all studies, others evaluated 15 studies (23%), randomly selected from 63 studies. As a result of the evaluation, descriptive codes were added in three studies covering the social inequality dimensions: and two other studies covering the curriculum dimensions. In addition, the interpretive code was arranged in a study. After reaching the final codes, the themes were reached by categorizing similar codes to reveal the social inequality dimensions, the curriculum dimensions, and for which purposes inequalities were handled in the studies. All data is stored detailed, and transparency has been paid attention to. In addition, ethics committee permission was obtained from Anadolu University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee for ethical considerations.

The data synthesized after the evaluation was reported in the findings section. While presenting the findings, connections were established where necessary, and tried to prevent gaps in the text. In addition, quotes from the studies are given to show examples at specific points.

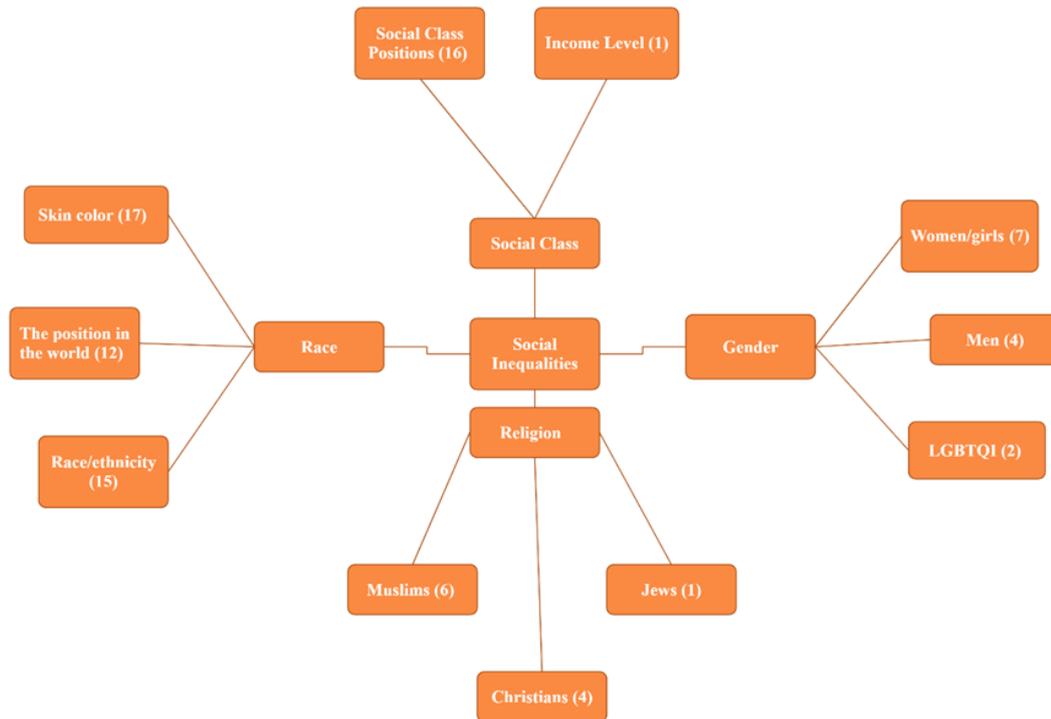
## Results

In parallel with the research questions, the findings were presented under three headings: “Social inequality and curriculum dimensions addressed in the studies, and distribution of these studies by years,” “Purposes of addressing inequalities in the studies,” and “Data sources and research designs.”

### **Social Inequality and Curriculum Dimensions Addressed in the Studies and Distribution of These Studies by Years**

In the studies included, it was seen that social inequalities were handled from different perspectives in the dimensions of ethnicity/race, gender, social class, and religion. The prominent study areas under each dimension are also presented in Figure 3. The numbers in the parentheses show the number of studies addressing this dimension.

Figure 3

*Social Inequality Dimensions/Sub-Dimensions Addressed in the Studies*

Studies focusing on race and social class dimensions are noteworthy. In the race dimension, studies based on skin color were carried out. Studies on black, mixed, white, yellow, or brown-skinned individuals were discussed within the scope of skin color. Studies were carried out on the rights of black people, the idea that whites are the superior race, the prejudices, and labeling of individuals with different skin colors, the criticisms that the curriculum development theory is based on white supremacy, and the extent to which individuals of different skin colors are included in the teaching materials. Also, within the scope of their position in the world, the differences in the implementation of the curriculum to the individuals in the third-world countries and to the individuals whose position in the world is various, and within the context of ethnicity, especially the rights of the natives, the exploitation they were exposed to, and assimilation studies were discussed.

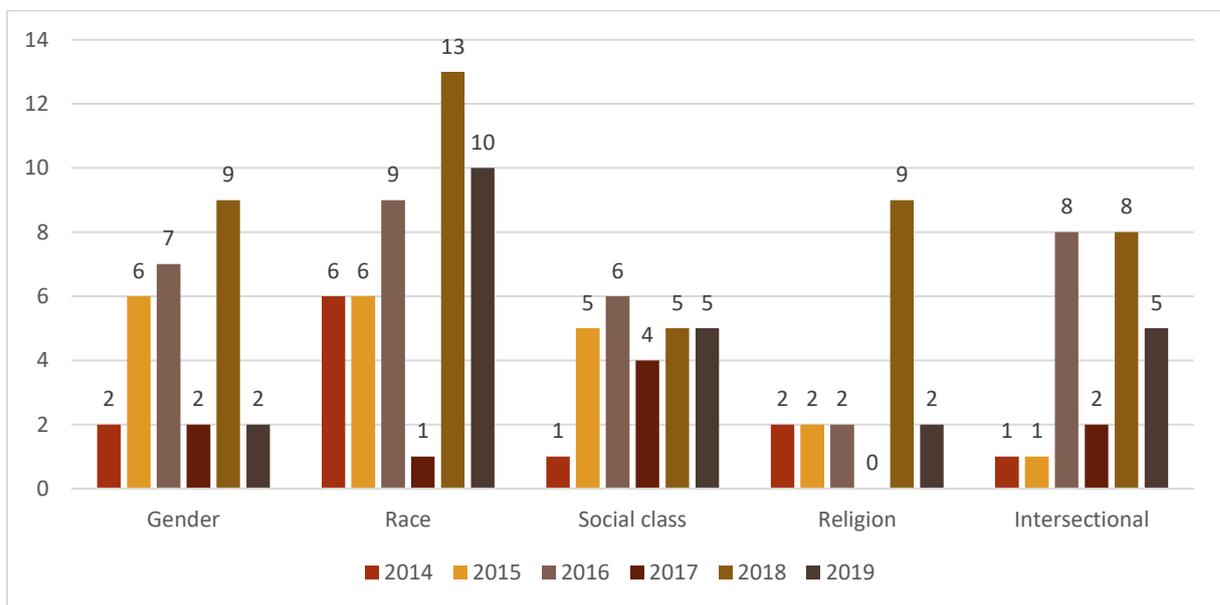
In the social class dimension, the income emphasis was made in only one study, and hierarchical class positions were at the forefront. Criticisms about the superiority of white people, especially concerning skin color, are also striking in the social class dimension because white people are associated with the upper class. In some studies, schools were divided into schools addressing upper and lower classes, while in other studies, certain countries were matched with these classes. In the religious dimension, it is seen that only Islam, Christianity and Judaism are included. Studies dealing with the religious dimension have been carried out on religions that are seen as disadvantaged and privileged and how much different religions are included in the design and implementation of the curriculum. In these studies, it has been seen that the author's point of view or the social context is essential in emphasizing which religion is prioritized. For example, in the study by Abdou (2018), how much space Christians were given in the Egyptian history books is examined. Since Muslims are the majority in Egypt, it has been revealed that this situation is reflected in the

books and that Christians are entirely ignored. However, in the study by Sheps (2019), in which history and citizenship education in Israel is examined from the perspectives of Israeli teachers, Jews have become a privileged group, and Muslims are presented as a disadvantaged group. In addition to these dimensions, studies have revealed criticisms of the low representation of women and individuals with different sexual orientations (LGBTQI) in the curriculum and materials in the gender dimension. The studies in this dimension reveal the male hierarchy in the field and education, negative adjectives (criminal, violent, vicious, etc.) about women, and how girls are portrayed differently from women.

The extent to which all these dimensions are handled in studies over the years is presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4

*Distribution of Inequalities by Years*



When the distribution of inequalities by years is examined, it is seen that there is no linear/systematic distribution. Although the distribution is not linear, a clear difference was observed between 2017 and 2018, especially in almost all dimensions. Although there was a decrease in the number of studies in 2017, the dimension of inequalities based on social class was studied twice more as other dimensions. The studies carried out in this dimension in 2017 mainly aimed at schools that appeal to the upper and lower classes. In 2017, there was no study on the dimension of religion. However, there has been an evident increase in addressing inequalities in 2018. It was also observed that intersectional studies were carried out in 2016 and 2018. While all studies included a disadvantaged or privileged group, 25 of the studies were handled from an intersectional perspective (such as Black women, Muslim Egyptians, lower-class, and Aborigines). From this point of view, intersectional studies constitute approximately 30 percent of all studies. For example, Vickery and Salinas (2019) expressed this intersectionality in their research: “With that knowledge in mind, we carefully crafted curricular resources that allowed us to challenge the negative perception and representations of Black women.” In this study, not only gender but also ethnicity/race are discussed interrelatedly as they cause inequality.

Regarding the curriculum dimensions, there is a general trend in examining the curriculum's purpose, content, and learning-teaching process (Table 3).

Table 3

*Curriculum Dimensions Addressed in the Studies by years*

Curriculum Dimensions	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Needs	1		2		1	1
Purpose/ outcome/output	2	3	3	2	3	
Contents	8	6	7	2	8	10
Learning-teaching process	4	8		3	9	4
Standards						1
Curriculum types	4	8	8	5	16	6
Philosophy of education		2		1	2	1
Educational policies			1		3	
Educational psychology					1	
Curriculum development theory			1			
Curriculum design			1			

Starting from 2014, when the studies focusing on inequality and curriculum dimensions were examined, it was seen that research was mainly done on how ethnic/racial diversity was represented in curriculum or textbooks, especially in studies carried out in 2014. In addition, there were studies on gender differences and social class/mobility about various topics included in the curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Although the studies on ethnicity/race were numerous, they did not show similarities regarding the issues they were based on and the curriculum dimensions. The content was also at the forefront that year.

The studies carried out in 2015 were within the framework of the implementation process of the curriculum for individuals with different social statuses. How individuals were taught with the curriculum developed by different foundations, the possibility of using the curriculum for social change, and the dominant ideologies reflected were popular research topics. Regarding the curriculum dimensions, the learning-teaching process and the inequality dimensions, especially gender, ethnicity/race, and social class, came to the fore. In the same year, the religious dimension included studies on how and to what extent religious diversity was reflected in the curriculum and equipping the curriculum with academic knowledge by eliminating the intensity of religious knowledge.

In the studies carried out in 2016, intersectionality was at the forefront. In particular, studies on Black feminism and gender-based judgments drew attention. In addition, studies on vocational curriculum and social classes were also numerous that year. In the curriculum dimensions, studies on purpose, content, or curriculum types, curriculum design, and development theory stood out, unlike in other years.

In 2017, when the least number of studies were conducted, studies made primarily in the social class dimension came to the fore. How the social class was affected by the curriculum, elite schools, vocational and academic curriculum, the implemented and hidden curriculum, the implementation process of the curriculum for individuals from different social statuses, and the perceptions of these students about the purposes have been examined. In a study conducted with the kindergarten group, the impact of the implemented curriculum on the development of gender roles was examined.

When the studies carried out in 2018 were examined, it was seen that the degree to which individuals of various ethnicities were reflected in the curriculum or the books, what kind of individual was aimed to be raised, the differences in the implementation of the curriculum for individuals from different social statuses, and the hidden curriculum were the common research topics. The hidden curriculum drew attention, mainly as a type of curriculum studied that year. Díaz Beltrán (2018) reflected on this situation in his study with the following words:

I describe how a curriculum of dislocation is taught at a private international school in Colombia and a public school in Central Pennsylvania in the USA. A curriculum of dislocation teaches how to assimilate into a Eurocentric system of power where Western European cultures are seen as an aspiration for non-Western peoples.

Finally, the studies which used conceptual analyzes were primarily made in 2019. Inequalities have been revealed through the concept of the ideal “child” and “school” reflected in the curriculum and books. In addition, the colonial idea continued to be at the forefront, and local peoples were emphasized to show their position and reveal their problems. As in other years, studies were conducted on how and to what extent diversity was reflected in the curriculum and books, how the implementation of the curriculum affected students, and the relationship between the situations reflected in the curriculum and real life. The examination of curriculum and books has been in question almost every year in terms of content. Especially History and Citizenship textbooks have been examined in more than one study. It can be said that these studies aim to understand the inequalities that exist from past to present. For example, Ríos-Rojas (2018) stated her aim in her research as follows:

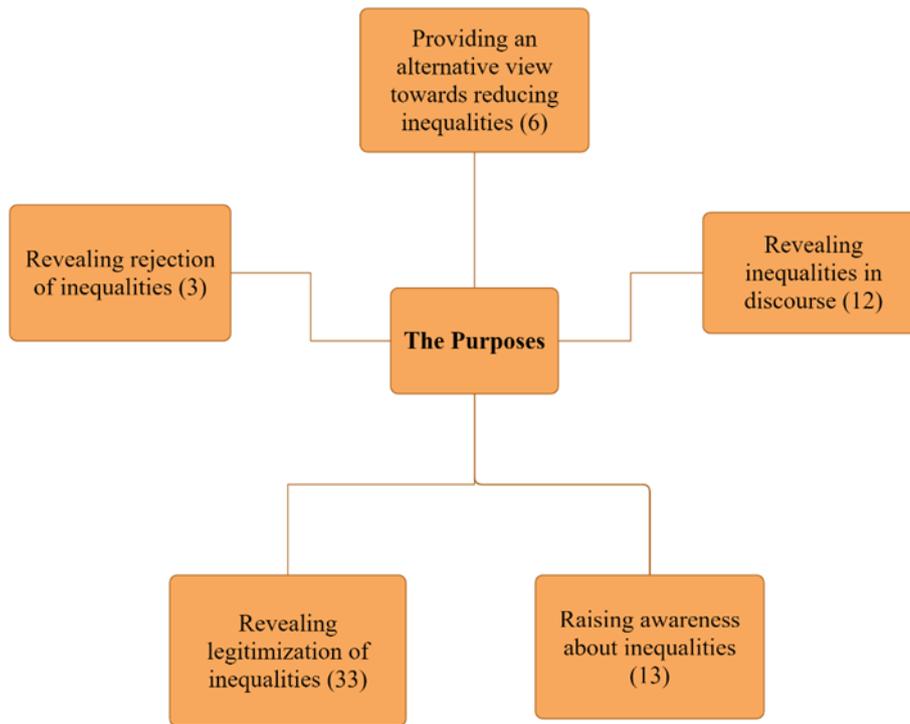
Beginning with a discourse analysis of the textbook used in the citizenship education class, I aim first to provide some examples of the ways in which the spectre of The Immigrant Other was one being actively produced through particular textbook discourses.

In summary, although specific dimensions come to the fore in all years, the studies that include different dimensions of inequality and curriculum offer richness. Although intersectionality has not been studied extensively, there has been an increase in intersectional studies since 2016.

### **Purposes of Addressing Inequalities in Studies**

In the curriculum studies, social inequalities were handled with the aims of “providing an alternative view towards reducing inequalities,” “revealing inequalities in discourse, legitimization, and rejection of inequalities,” and “raising awareness about inequalities” (Figure 5).

Figure 5

*Purposes of Addressing Social Inequalities in Studies*

The most emphasized purpose of the studies was to reveal the legitimization of inequalities. Within the scope of this purpose, how inequalities were produced or reproduced through the curriculum was discussed in the studies. For instance, in a study conducted by Gansen (2017), the research questions were specified as follows:

How do preschools participate in the gendered sexual socialization of children? What approaches to sexual socialization do teachers use in preschool? What messages about sexuality and gender do young children receive from teachers' sexual socialization approaches, and how do they reproduce, or resist, these messages with their peers?

As can be understood from the research questions in this study, the primary purpose was to reflect how inequalities were legitimized. Some studies also mentioned a second purpose to demonstrate how inequalities were rejected [Two studies]. These studies showed that disadvantaged people rarely resisted unequal social positions, which was reflected less. The studies emphasized the disadvantage more, and the adverse situation of the underprivileged people was echoed by those in a privileged position, those in the same disadvantaged position, or those who had experienced this position before. Although raising awareness about inequalities was in line with this aim, the studies about legitimization only reflected the current situation. The purpose of raising awareness was about social change, dominant ideologies, and differences/diversity in the world. In the study conducted by Taylor (2014), the difference between the purposes is seen:

This research suggests implications for teaching and curriculum design that aims to help students develop more sophisticated and nuanced understandings of a place physically 'distant' to them. The study suggests the value of paying attention to the dimension of diversity within countries and diversity between countries when curriculum planning.

Moreover, discourses about privileged or disadvantaged groups are discussed in the studies. The idea of demonstrating that underprivileged groups are overlooked was at the

forefront. Content and hidden curriculum were generally analyzed in studies dealing with dominant discourses. For instance, Sheps (2019) examined how teachers evaluated the racist discourses in the History and Citizenship textbooks and the freedom to reflect their ideas in the curriculum. The purpose of the study was expressed as follows: “This study examines a selection of Jewish–Israeli teachers’ reflections on teaching high school history and civics, and the institutionalized racism that they encounter both within the textbooks and from their students.” Also, in the philosophy of education dimension, dominant discourses were included in one study. This study discussed a learning-teaching process that supports reconciliation between natives and colonial peoples through an indigenous perspective. In particular, the underlying philosophical perspective was reflected in the study (Marom & Rattray, 2019).

Under the purpose of providing an alternative view towards reducing inequalities, there was the idea of offering an alternative to the dominant Western-oriented curriculum development theory, approaches, methods, techniques, and strategies used in the learning-teaching process. The studies emphasized what can be done as an alternative to minimize inequalities, especially in the learning-teaching process. The purpose of the study, in which the curriculum development theory was criticized, was expressed as follows (Ohito, 2016):

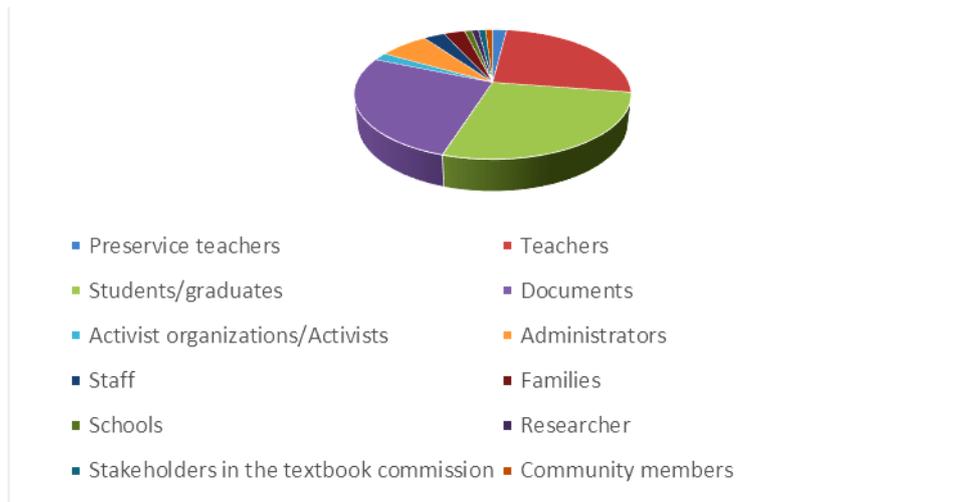
I aim to communicate the affordances of a Black feminist approach to curriculum theorizing for upsetting the hierarchy that protectively preserves the dominant “White, male, Western European, and American” curricular presence. In this article, I demonstrate how Black feminist theorizing of curriculum foregrounds knowledge of the complexities lived by Black girls and women.

As can be understood from the purpose of the study, the current situation has been criticized, and a solution has been proposed to deal with it. However, the basic approach of this study is different from the studies carried out to reveal the current situation. It has the desire to criticize and offer alternatives. This can be considered the distinction between the interpretative and critical paradigms. Similarly, in another study, the curriculum was criticized, and the reproduction of Western thought was discussed by adopting an approach that would reveal the inequalities that learners were exposed to in their daily lives. (Truman, 2019).

### **Data Sources and Research Designs**

The studies included in the research were examined in terms of data sources. The data obtained from this examination are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6  
*Data Sources in the Studies*



When Figure 6 was examined, it was seen that students, teachers, and documents were used primarily as data sources. The documents included curriculum, textbooks, and materials, exam papers, assignments, etc. In the studies in which documents were used, the general purpose was to examine the existing situation regarding inequalities, compare disadvantaged and privileged groups and analyze the reflections of inequalities in the curriculum materials. In the studies conducted with students, students were generally considered disadvantaged. However, in the study conducted with 37 male students studying only in an elite school, students were in a privileged position. Women or girls were generally disadvantaged. In some studies, dealing with underprivileged students, “Othering” was emphasized. Also, in three studies, students were considered individuals who supported the change of the unequal world.

In studies conducted with teachers, white teachers were generally considered privileged. In four studies, teachers supported a change to end inequalities, while in other studies, they stood out with their roles as authorities or only educators. The studies also included administrators, families, officials/staff, teacher candidates, activists, researchers, schools and community members. In studies conducted with administrators, the purpose generally was to either reveal opinions or reflect negative attitudes. Since families were the group that reflected the status, their views about the curriculum were also discussed in the studies in general. For instance, in the study by Black et al. (2018), both the participants and the framework of the study were expressed as follows:

We provide a qualitative picture of language provision in these two schools from the perspectives of key stakeholders – school principals, teachers, students and parents. We also draw on observational data of language classes. Within a largely social class framework, the aim is to provide an understanding of the state of language provision in these schools. We argue that students in these schools are currently experiencing unequal access to the linguistic and cultural capital associated with language learning relative to students in more privileged communities and schools.

Officials and staff were considered other stakeholders who expressed their opinions in the studies. In the ethnographic studies, informal interviews were carried out with the school officials, and notes were taken. Individuals who produced content for the curriculum

in private institutions also participated in the studies that included the staff. Furthermore, community members took part in a study to express their opinions on the evaluation of the curriculum developed by the locals to make the teachers get to know the local people, think critically and provide teaching in this direction. In two cases, studies were conducted with teachers who were activists or in activist groups. The first one developed a curriculum against the official curriculum (Maber, 2018). The other one presented the curriculum, materials and resources designed with the opinions on what can be done to develop a critical awareness using the official curriculum (Navarro, 2018). In another study, the researcher took himself as a data source and examined how the curriculum implicitly pushed him to be Western through his education process, the materials he prepared or the notes he kept (Díaz Beltrán, 2018). Finally, a study carried out at a conservative school interpreted how the school contributed or hindered the curriculum that supported freedom and how perspectives on instilling/reducing inequalities could change due to this situation. The conflict between the school's and curriculum's philosophy was examined (Keddie, 2015).

The research designs used in the studies were also examined. The data obtained from the examination are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4  
*Research Designs Used in Studies*

Design	Frequency ( <i>f</i> )
Case Study	20
Ethnographic Study	10
Mixed methods	3
Longitudinal study	2
Narrative research	1
Action research	1
Mapping study	1
A/r/tography	1
Genealogy research	1
Not specified	24
Total	64

*Note.* (More than one design was used in one study).

When Table 4 was examined, it was seen that the researchers mostly preferred the case and ethnographic studies. It shows that a detailed research process was selected to bring social inequalities to the fore. In particular, aiming to reveal the current situation could be considered a reason for this preference. In addition, ethnography is a design that has been dealt with in various ways. In some studies, it was enriched as critical autoethnography or critical ethnography, while in others, it is enriched as an ethnographic case study. Another preferred design in studies was a/r/tography. A/r/tography consists of the first letters of the

artist, researcher and teacher. It has brought a different dimension to the study by combining art, education and research. There was another study in which genealogical research and ethnography designs were used together. Since the origin of an education policy called “Convivencia” was questioned in this study, the researcher designed the study in this way (Hernando-Lloréns, 2018). The mapping study was conducted to develop an inclusive curriculum for individuals with different sexual orientations in a school. The school as a place where queer subjects were present and how the tools related to the curriculum would be provided were discussed by revealing the experiences of the students (Schmidt, 2015).

The number of studies whose design was not specified constituted approximately one-third of all studies. However, data collection tools and data analysis methods were explained in detail in these studies. It was stated that some of these studies used different analysis methods, such as discourse analysis and critical content analysis. Social inequalities were handled from a critical perspective, and discourses were regarded as essential to reveal those. Also, interviews, observations, and questionnaires were mainly used as data collection tools.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The study revealed that social inequalities were handled in many curriculum studies in the international literature. These studies covered various topics from different perspectives. These perspectives reflected the authors’ point of view in general. In some studies, the disadvantaged were favored; in others, these people were underrepresented. Especially when the articles were published and the issues that occurred at that time are determinants of the trends on social inequalities in the curriculum studies. It can be said that international literature is based on current social issues and events. The scholars are following the agenda and trying to change perspectives related to the field. The conclusion and discussion for each research question were given under the headings mentioned in the results section.

### **Curriculum and Social Inequality Dimensions Addressed in the Studies and Distribution of These Studies by Years**

As a result of the research process, it was found that although the inequality and curriculum dimensions did not vary substantially over the years, intersectional studies began to be conducted. Despite the same kind of topics covered in the studies, the perspectives and scope differed. It was observed that the change over the years was shaped by how the journals dealt with the topics covered. This situation might be because specific issues of the journals included special cases, and the daily trends were followed. For example, Curriculum Inquiry focused on curriculum reforms in Asia in the second issue of 2018. This situation led to the concentration of studies on the issue of the dimension of ethnicity/race. In the studies examined in the present study, the scope of the curriculum was mainly focused on curriculum development within and for the school. For this reason, the dimensions of content, learning-teaching process, and curriculum types were considered in these studies; on the other side, the dimensions of curriculum design, curriculum development theory, educational psychology, and standards were discussed the least. It was also observed that the studies focused on the applied dimensions rather than the theoretical dimensions.

As a result of a study in the literature, it was found that the management style, political agenda, how success was evaluated in studies abroad, globalization, commitment to the curriculum, hidden curriculum, integrated curriculum, migration, social justice, democracy, environmental education, equality based on race and gender, critical pedagogy and cybernetics constituted the scope of the curriculum studies conducted in the last ten years. On the other side, it was found that this scope was shaped around globalization, central education, distant goals, secularism, commitment to the curriculum, curriculum literacy, adaptation process to curriculum change, curriculum evaluation, curriculum development theory, hidden curriculum, and neglected curriculum in the national studies. In addition, it has been revealed that social issues are relatively less addressed in curriculum studies nationally (Ataş et al., 2021). Selçuk et al. (2016) examined the doctoral theses written in curriculum and instruction between 2011-2015. They have addressed the themes of curriculum, computer, and technology, teacher training, student success, teaching methods and techniques, learning styles, strategies, and approaches. Özkal (2020), on the other hand, stated that the least studied topics in doctoral theses in the field were multicultural education, internationalization, strategy teaching, and comparative education. These results showed that the scope between the years of 2011-2020 had not changed much. Even scholars tried to touch on important issues, but these were insufficient to solve the problems.

In the study by Yeşilpınar-Uyar (2017), in which the curriculum studies in an international journal were examined, it was found that research was carried out on the structure of the curriculum in general, the curriculum development process, the learning-teaching process, reform studies, current issues such as human rights, multiculturalism, and citizenship education. In this respect, considering the international literature, it can be said that current and social issues are widely studied within the scope of the curriculum studies, unlike the national literature. Shahjahan et al. (2021) connected this situation with the context of the decolonization of curriculum and pedagogy. According to them, the scope of the curriculum and pedagogy were nuanced across geography, discipline, and stakeholders. Therefore, international literature gives importance to social issues.

On the other hand, it has been found that there are more curriculum outputs for developing curriculum in the graduate curriculum in Turkey, and there are few curriculum outputs for application (Atik-Kara et al., 2020). In this respect, it can be said that the foundations of the graduate curriculum are shaped differently from those of international literature. Considering that the graduate curriculum may also affect the studies done or to be done in the field, it can be thought that there is a similarity between the selected topics and the content of the curriculum. According to Bümen and Aktan (2014), while the international literature is followed on the learning-teaching process or approaches, it is not observed in current curriculum discussions. In this respect, it can focus more on specific international literature points. The reason may be resistance to change. Since people cannot quickly accept new and ambiguous situations, they might not want to step out of their comfort zone. This may lead to repetition by narrowing the scope of the studies.

According to the research results, it was seen that the studies remained between the curriculum development and curriculum understanding paradigms. Some studies examined the content and learning-teaching process under the curriculum development paradigm. The curriculum understanding paradigm was followed by critically analyzing curriculum theory

and curriculum. In some studies, in the national literature, it was emphasized that the focus of curriculum studies was mainly on the learning-teaching process (Erişti, 2013; Erkensiz & Bozpolat, 2013; Hazır-Bıkmaz et al., 2013; Kozikoğlu & Senemoğlu, 2015; Özkal, 2020) From this point of view, it can be said that there is a most preferred scope and an adopted approach in curriculum studies. Vaughan and Nuñez (2020) repeated a study conducted in 1992 based on the reflections of the field experts in 2018. As a result of this comparison, John Dewey, Ralph Tyler, Joseph Schwab, Elliot Eisner, George Counts, Hollis Caswell, Lawrence Cremin, John Goodlad, Benjamin Bloom, and Dwayne Huebner were included in the most cited experts list in 1992, while the most cited experts in the field in 2018 were John Dewey, William Pinar, Paulo Freire, Maxine Greene, Nel Noddings, Michael Apple, Patti Lather, Elliot Eisner, Bell Hooks, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Thomas Popkewitz. It can be said that the experts in the list for 2018 reflected the transition towards curriculum understanding. The same situation has been observed in the widely used books in the field.

In terms of inequalities, the dominant hierarchy of “Western, white and male” was reflected in the curriculum studies. While reflecting on the inequalities, it was seen that the author's personality, perspective, and experiences who worked on the curriculum process were quite evident. A striking result of the lists included in the study of Vaughan and Nuñez (2020) was that most of the experts were Western and white men. A significant increase was observed when the distribution of inequalities by years was analyzed in 2018. The reason for that could be the immigration movements, the American presidential elections, and the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union (BREXIT). There may have been a deterioration in the social order with these events, leading to inequalities. Moreover, the ethnicity/race dimension drew attention as the most studied inequality dimension every year. This might be because inequalities based on ethnicity/race were an old and unsolved problem. In addition, the increase in the number of multicultural countries and immigrants in the international arena could be considered a reason for this situation. For example, when the global migration statistics report of TURKSTAT (2020) was examined, it was seen that 677,042 people migrated from other countries to Turkey in 2019, while 330,289 people migrated from Turkey to countries abroad. Even when considered only from Turkey's point of view, the number was quite striking. For this reason, it might seem natural that studies on this topic have become widespread worldwide. However, there might be a limitation in treating inequalities in curriculum studies in the national literature, or inequalities were generally focused on in different disciplines.

As Bümen and Aktan (2014) stated, such controversial issues were thought to be of interest to other fields, such as political science or law. It was also considered essential to ensure the recognition of the curriculum area to destroy this prejudice. In the study conducted by Sever et al. (2019), it was revealed that the glory of the field was a problem. Gözütok et al. (2010), on the other hand, stated that individuals who specialized in this field were insufficient in providing recognition of the field, and it was necessary to know that this field was related to different disciplines. In addition, the discourses produced in the field must be interpreted to understand the curriculum. This shows that the curriculum should be analyzed using various disciplines and social inequalities might not be handled without a multidisciplinary perspective. However, necessary arrangements must be made to achieve that.

According to Demirhan-İşcan and Hazır-Bıkmaz (2012), who examined the graduate education curriculum, the foreign curriculum included courses that dealt with the relationship between the curriculum and issues such as society, ideology, minorities, gender equality, multiculturalism, and research courses on mixed research methods. In Turkey, on the other hand, the postgraduate curriculum was inadequate rather than completely lacking in this respect. In this direction, Demirhan-İşcan and Hazır-Bıkmaz (2012) suggested that various courses and applied courses should be included in the curriculum, thus developing different perspectives in the field. Atik-Kara et al. (2020) also stated that theoretical courses are given mainly in the graduate curriculum in Turkey. Still, a balance between theory and practice cannot be established by giving less place to practical classes. Considering the time elapsed between the two studies, it can be said that the graduate curriculum has not been improved, and current trends have not been reflected in the curriculum even though the problems have been revealed by the researchers before. The view that the curriculum is a political, aesthetic, autobiographical, or historical text that tries to understand the situation of equality, class discrimination, ethnicity/race, gender, religion, and other factors in the curriculum should also be taken into consideration and a critical perspective should be brought to the fore. With a change in attitude, there will be a richness in handling inequalities in curriculum studies.

### **Purposes of Addressing Inequalities in Studies**

Another conclusion obtained is that inequalities in curriculum studies were mostly handled to reflect the current situation, revealing the legitimation of inequalities. Although the purposes differed, the answers to the questions of what inequalities were, how they were experienced, and what could be done to reduce inequalities were sought in the studies. There were many other examples of these studies in the international literature (Blanchet Garneau et al., 2021; Kitchen & Taylor, 2020; Popp et al., 2021; Valenzuela, 2017). This shows that inequalities are still a current issue, and many scholars are trying to draw attention to this topic.

In the studies, the disadvantage is very prominent. As Apple (2018) stated, looking critically at the curriculum could be cultural, political, economic, etc. It was a complex task with many dimensions. While it was necessary to include critical studies in the curriculum, it should not just become a subject area but a part of life. Apple (2013) sums it up this way: “This is something I am concerned about in terms of society. This situation academicizes the political rather than politicizing the academic.” The critical approach has not been fully established in curriculum studies in the international sense. For this reason, studies that reveal the current situation are more common, or, as Apple says, the topics to be criticized can only be considered a subject area.

### **Data Sources and Research Designs**

The inequality and curriculum dimensions addressed in the studies and the purpose of addressing inequalities have enriched the data sources and design. The data sources in the studies were chosen from a wide range. This wide range of curricula, which included both students and teachers and members of the society indirectly affecting education in one way or another, provided a multidimensional approach to inequalities in the studies. It was observed that the studies were generally carried out with individuals affected by the

curriculum. In addition, since the most common purpose was to reflect the current situation, the number of studies with documents was relatively high. In addition to examining the curriculum and trying to make sense of it, discourse and content analyses were most common. Especially students in a disadvantaged positions and teachers in a privileged positions drew attention. Few studies included supporters of social change to reduce inequalities. It was concluded that the most preferred research design in the examined studies was qualitative designs such as ethnography and case studies. In this way, an in-depth analysis was done. In addition to frequently preferred designs, designs that emerged in different areas were used in curriculum studies. When the curriculum studies that dealt with inequalities in the national literature were examined (Balcı & Sel, 2017; Çelik et al., 2019; Karaboğa, 2020; Şen, 2019), it was seen that the studies were mostly carried out through qualitative designs. The reason for that might be that these studies required an in-depth examination. In this respect, although the international and national literature overlapped, it could be said that the designs in the international literature were more diverse, and there was a higher tendency toward innovations.

In the light of all the results of the research, recommendations for the researchers, policymakers and the literature in the national and international areas are presented below:

✓ *Recommendations for the International Area*

- Adopting different perspectives in curriculum studies to prevent the dominant Western, white and male hierarchy,
- Explaining how the context in which disadvantaged or privileged groups were identified in a more detailed and transparent manner.
- Focusing on different dimensions of the curriculum,
- Carrying out studies that support/push change beyond the studies that reveal the current situation in curriculum studies, and
- Handling the social inequalities in an intersectional way rather than one-dimensionally and revealing what happens due to the interaction of different dimensions.

✓ *Recommendations for the National Area*

- Following current research and trends to expand the scope of the curriculum studies,
- Putting current trends and innovations on the curriculum development paradigm of the graduate programs, diversifying the courses in a way that will bring different perspectives to individuals, and revealing curriculum analysis practices in which inequalities will be critically addressed,
- Diversifying the courses in terms of research methods and designs and testing suitable designs for various fields where inequalities can be addressed in research,
- Addressing inequalities in curriculum studies to understand the curriculum apart from book reviews,
- Making the disadvantaged people visible by diversifying the participants or sample in the research, and
- Publishing special journals on current issues to raise awareness in national journals where curriculum studies are included.

### Statement of Responsibility

The study was conducted and reported with the equal collaboration of the researchers. The researchers had similar roles in the tasks for conceptualization, methodology, software, validation, data collection and analysis, resources, writing-original draft, writing- review & editing, visualization and supervision of the study.

### Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to disclose.

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