



INESJOURNAL

ULUSLARARASI EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ DERGİSİ
THE JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION SCIENCE

Yıl: 2, Sayı: 4, Eylül 2015, s.348-357

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INVESTIGATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL 7TH GRADE STUDENTS' SOCIAL SCIENCES LESSON, CHANGE AND CONTINUITY PERCEPTION SKILL LEVELS⁴

Abstract

The purpose of the present research is defining secondary school 7th grade students' social sciences lesson change and continuity perception skill levels. The research adopted survey model, which is a quantitative research design. Work group was selected via simple random selection technique. A total of 80 7th grade students studying at secondary schools in provincial centre of Muğla in 2014-2015 educational year spring semester participated in the research. For the research, acquisitions appropriate for change and continuity perception skill in "A Journey to Turkish History" unit of 7th grade social sciences lesson were determined and an achievement test and open-ended questions were prepared. For the content validity of the questions, the opinions of two social sciences teachers, a Turkish language teacher, and an academician studying the subject field were asked, and the questions were revised in accordance with their suggestions. Data obtained from students' answers were analysed on SPSS. Arithmetic average scores and t-test values were utilised for statistical analyses. Findings obtained in the present research showed that students were successful in perceiving change and continuity.

Key Words: Social Sciences, Secondary School, Skill, Change and Continuity.

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the culture of the society they live in and themselves, individuals need to learn and internalise social sciences in relation to past, present and future (Özen and Sağlam, 2010). In the educational process, students can achieve this, by acquiring time, change and continuity as a skill. According to Lomas (1993), in the educational dimension, it is hard for student to learn some concepts such as change, development, continuity, progress and

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4 A part of this work VII held on 8-10 May 2015 . International Social Science Education was presented as oral presentations at the Congress.

regression with a real time perception. Safran and Şimşek (2009) stated that, acquiring a full competency in time perception depends on individuals' interaction with their environment, or rather intensity of the experiences activities, which can reinforce the perception and comprehension of time.

Today, knowledge is increasing rapidly, and as a result, raising individuals, who learn to learn, and acquiring skills of what is learn is now more important in education, and with the various of information sources, qualities requiring skills have come into prominence in education (Mutluer, 2013). Knowledge and skills acquired especially in primary education, which is important for individuals' development period, form the basis for knowledge and skills to be acquired in other steps of education (Çelikkaya, 2011). In this context, Social Sciences education curriculum was changed and restructured in 2005. Unlike previous curriculums, the skills to be acquired by students at the end of education were explained in this one (Kabapınar, 2009). Learning domains and skills took place in the curriculum, and it was stated that using information was more important than memorising it (MEB, 2005).

Skill refers to predisposition required to do something, and designed to be acquired, developed, and transferred to life during a learning process (Ata, 2009). In other words, it is an individuals' ability to make meaning of the knowledge acquired in the learning process, and reflect this in their performance expediently.

Skills in social sciences curriculum were defined in the units, under the title of "skills to be given directly", in the "explanations" section on the right part of unit schemas (Kaymakçı, 2015). Nine learning domains were created within the curriculum. Each learning domain was organized in a way to cover social sciences units. Only "Time, Continuity, and Change" was not defined as a single learning domain, but was integrated to other learning domains (Aydın and Eyecisoy, 2014). In the curriculum, 9 basic skills aimed to be acquired within lessons, and six social sciences specific skills were included. Six social sciences specific basic skills included in the curriculum are classified as; perception of time and chronology, social participation, perception of change and continuity, perception of place, and empathy (Şimşek and Öztürk, 2014). Of these skills, perception of change and continuity were separated in certain steps within Social Sciences curriculum. These steps are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Steps for Change and Continuity Perception Skill

Finding Similarities and Differences,
Perceiving Change and Continuity,
Distinguishing between historical phenomena and Interpretations,
Defining Problems and their Causes in the Past,
Finding Alternatives to the Solution of a Historical Problem

Three social sciences specific skills were included in 7th grade curriculum. These are empathy, perception of time and chronology, and perception of change and continuity. In the A Journey to Turkish History Unit, Distinguishing between Historical Phenomena and Interpretations step of perception of change and continuity was included.

Some of the previous studies on the skills included in Social Sciences curriculum in the literature are as follows. Safran and Şimşek (2006), investigated the effect of multimedia use in 7th grade social sciences lesson on acquisitions of time-chronology and change-continuity perceptions and attitude towards lesson. Çelikkaya (2011) studied teacher remarks on the

acquisition of the skills in Social Sciences curriculum; while Karatekin, Sönmez and Kuş (2012) examined the factors affecting the communicative skills of primary school students. Oruç and Akgün (2010) studied the graphic literacy skills of primary school 7th grade social sciences students, and found that graphic literacy skills of students were medium level (47%). Larsson and Jhonston (1983) stated in their research that, secondary school 7th grade students had difficulties in understanding subject related to time, and the most important reason for this was that time and continuity were not included in the curriculum (Wood, 1995).

The statement in Social sciences curriculum “It develops knowledge, concepts, values and skills, and prioritizes the learning” (MEB, 2005) indicates that it aims to make students acquire knowledge in teaching step, and turn these into skills in the final process. Students’ forming change and continuity perception is important for them to be able to learn social sciences subjects. Any deficiency in this matter may result in students’ failure to form a correct and qualified historical awareness (Özen and Sağlam, 2010). In accordance with this purpose, the present research tries to define students’ level of perception of change and continuity skill, which is aimed to be provided to secondary school students. The answers to following questions are sought accordingly:

- 1- What level is secondary school 7th grade students’ perception of change and continuity skill in A Journey to Turkish History?
- 2- Is there a significant difference across genders in terms of secondary school 7th grade students’ perception of change and continuity skill levels?

METHOD

This section includes the method, universe, sample, and data analysis processes of the present research.

Research Model

The present research adopted survey model, which is a quantitative research design, since it tries to define 7th grade students’ level of perception of change and continuity skill in social sciences curriculum. Survey model, tries to describe a past or present case, as it is (Karasar, 2002).

Work Group

The work group of the research was formed with 45 female, 35 male, a total of 80 7th grade students studying at secondary schools affiliated to Mugla Provincial Directorate of National Education in 2014-2015 education year spring semester. Work group was selected via random sampling method.

Data Collection Tools

In order to collect data, two units covering social sciences 7th grade perception of change and continuity skill were defined and a data collection of two parts was created. The literature was reviewed while preparing questions and a 20-item achievement test covering perception of change and continuity skill was prepared in accordance with the objectives of “A Journey to Turkish History” unit. In the process of preparation of the questions the related literature was reviewed and a total of 31 questions compromising from four options multiple choice questions and open ended questions to get more detailed information in accordance with objectives of “A journey to Turkish History” unit. In the stage of question preparation 7th grade social studies textbook, question banks and questions prepared by the researchers has been used.

After analyzing ITEMAN distinctiveness index and item difficulty index of the achievement test 2, 8, 9, 14, 26 and 33rd questions that have a distinctiveness power under 20 have been omitted. Büyüköztürk (2006) explains that items with distinctiveness index are .30 or higher distinguish in a good level and items that have scores between .20 and .30 can be included if they are considered necessary but items that have scores under .20 must not be included. Tekin (2003) states that it is an affirmative situation that average difficulty of a test is 0.50. Thus 25 items whose difficulty indexes are close to 0.50 are included in the test. The average difficulty level of the test has been found as 0.45 and the test given its final shape as a 25 questions achievement test.

In the assessment process “1” point given for each correct answer while incorrect and unanswered questions scored with “0”. A pilot implementation was conducted on a 40-student classroom for the reliability of the test. Analysis of the obtained data showed that reliability coefficient (KR20) was 0.78. For the content validity of the questions, the opinions of two social sciences teachers, a Turkish language teacher, and an academician studying the subject field were asked, and the questions were revised in accordance with their suggestions.

Table 2. Dimensions and question distribution for Change and Continuity Perception Achievement Test

Change and Continuity Perception Skill Steps	Related Questions
1. Perceiving change and continuity occurring in time	1,2,3,4,5,23
2. Finding similarities and differences	12,13,14, 15,21
3. Discriminating between historical phenomena and interpretations	16,17,18,19,22
4. Defining problems and their causes in the past	6,7,8,9,10,24
5. Finding alternatives to the solution of a historical problem	6,11,20,25,

Data Analysis

Data obtained in the present research were analysed on SPSS. Arithmetic average scores were calculates in order to define 7th grade students' perception of change and continuity skill levels. T-test was utilised in order to find out whether there were any significant differences in terms of gender variable.

FINDINGS

Data related to arithmetic average scores for secondary school 7th grade students' perception of change and continuity skill levels in A Journey to Turkish History unit are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3. Arithmetic Average Scores for Secondary School 7th Grade Students' Perception of Change and Continuity Skills

Number of questions	N	X	Sd	Minimum	Maximum
25	80	0,65	0,18	0,14	1,00

According to data related to perception of change and continuity skill in social sciences lesson presented in Table 3, students' (N=80) average score on the achievement test for 25 questions was $X=0.65$. Considering that, highest score to get on the achievement test was $X=1.00$ and the lowest was $X=0.14$, more than half of the students were successful in performing perception of change and continuity skill. Özen and Sağlam (2010), who conducted an action research on perception of change and continuity with 7th grade students, found that, almost all of the students could recognize change and continuity, and interpret the occurrence of change.

Table 4. Arithmetic Average Scores for Secondary School 7th Grade Students' Perception of Change and Continuity Skill by Steps

Perception of Change and Continuity Steps	N	\bar{X}	Sd
Perceiving change and continuity	80	0,76	0,19
Finding similarities and differences	80	0,65	0,24
Discriminating between historical phenomena and interpretations	80	0,68	0,31
Defining problems and their causes in the past	80	0,51	0,27
Finding alternatives to the solution of a historical problem	80	0,68	0,28

Average values related to in which step of change and continuity perception skill in A Journey to Turkish History unit secondary school 7th grade students were more successful are presented in Table 4. According to data presented in the table, change and continuity step had the highest average ($X=0.76$) according to the answers given by students. Therefore, the step of the skill in which the students had the highest score was perceiving change and continuity. The open-ended question asked to students for this step was "Compare and contrast Turkish culture today and Ottoman culture". Student coded S49's answer was "Today, we don't show love and respect to elderly. The reason for this is the upbringing". Student S10' reply "Today Mugla chimneys are still in use" was a sample for continuity.

The steps, in which the students were most successful following change and continuity, were "Discriminating between historical phenomena and interpretations" ($X=0.68$), and "Finding alternatives to the solution of a historical problem" ($X=0.68$). The open-ended question asked to students for the finding alternatives to the solution of a historical problem step was, "What do you think should be done to main traditional handicrafts?" Most of the students' answer was developing the technology. Besides this, some of the other answers from the students were as follows: Student coded S61 said "If the number of apprentices increase, handicrafts can increase as well", and student coded S1 said "The use of machines should be limited. More people should do the work", while student coded S55 replied as "School should offer handicrafts education."

The step of perception of change and continuity in which students got the lowest average score was "Defining problems and their causes in the past" ($X=0.51$). As the open-ended question for this step, students were provided with a text on the crusades and they were asked to find the reasons for the emergence of this war. Most of the students listed the reasons of the war as political, economic, religious, etc. For instance, student coded S49's answer was "Europeans wanted to confiscate the riches of Anatolia".

Data related to the comparison of secondary school 7th grade students' perception of change and continuity skill levels in terms of gender are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. T-test Results for the Comparison of Secondary School 7th Grade Students' Perception of Change and Continuity Skill Level Scores across Genders

Groups	N	X	Sd	t	p
Female	47	0,66	0,15	,352	,726
Male	33	0,64	0,22		

According to the data presented in Table 5, perception of change and continuity skill score average of 33 male students was $X=0.64$, while average score for 47 female students, who participated in the present research was $X=0.66$. Sig.(2-tailed) value for the difference between male and female students was 0.726, $p>.05$. Accordingly, there are no significant differences between male and female students in terms of their perception of change and continuity skill levels.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

The present research was conducted in order to define secondary school 7th grade students' level of perceiving change and continuity in A Journey to Turkish History unit. In accordance with this purpose, an achievement test was prepared in order to define students' levels of perceiving change and continuity. Analysis of the obtained data showed that, achievement score average of students, who participated in the present research ($n=80$), was $X=0.65$ for 25 questions. Accordingly, for perception of change and continuity skill in A Journey to Turkish History unit, more than half of the 7th grade students were successful. Similarly, Safran and Şimşek (2006) studied 4th-8th grade students' historical time concept and the development of related skills. Their findings showed that, students had a medium level achievement in change and continuity concepts, and they had "perfect" success in expressing change with examples. Özen and Sağlam (2010) as well conducted an action research in order to define 7th grade students' perception of change and continuity. According to the findings of this research, students had difficulty in expressing change, but more than half of their participants were successful in the pictures related to change and continuity shown during the lesson. Akbaba, Keçe and Erdem (2012) found that multimedia use had a positive effect on students' skills of perceiving time and chronology, and change and continuity, and students were successful in perceiving change and continuity. The findings of these research studying the perception of change and continuity are in agreement with the finding of the present research that, students' achievement average was $X=0.65$. On the other hand, Çelikkaya (2011), who conducted a research in order to define social sciences teachers' remarks on student' gaining skills determined in the curriculum, and found that teacher thought that students partially gained those skills.

In the social sciences curriculum, perception of change and continuity skill was divided in steps. Data obtained from the scale prepared in accordance with these steps showed that students had the highest average score on change and continuity step ($X=0.76$). Therefore, the step of the skill in which the students had the highest score was perceiving change and continuity. Another interesting finding related to this step was that, examples students provided in their answers to the open-ended question were mostly related to cultural elements. They specifically explained the cultural elements of Muğla region in change and continuity step. This finding can be explained with one of the basic principles of learning; from immediate to remote, and Vygotsky's (1985) social learning theory, "what children learn with the help of their parents and social environment", because individuals can learn the concept of change in their daily lives

with formal education, and besides in their own lives and through their interaction with their social environment. Similarly, Levstik and Barton (1997) claimed that primary school students can follow continuity in their social lives. Additionally, in accordance with Piaget's theory of cognitive development, 7th grade students are in concrete operational stage (Kıncal and Yazgan, 2010), which is important for acquiring time perspective, and success in understanding change and continuity concepts. Hodkinson (1995), Wood (1995) and Friedman (1978) also stated that, understanding continuity concept was difficult for children, still it was an important skill for gaining acquisitions (Web:1). The findings of the research conducted by Şimşek (2006) showed that, students had a medium level achievement in performing change and continuity perception, and students, who lacked historical time and chronology skills could be successful at change and continuity perception. Şimşek (2006) evaluated this finding as a result of chronological approach in Turkish education system.

Another finding of the present research was that secondary school 7th grade students got the lowest average score ($X=0.51$) in "Defining problems and their reasons in the past" step. For this step, students were asked to find the problem related to a past event presented them with a text, and its causes. According to obtained data, student made lists of titles such as social, economic, and religious, instead of explaining the question.

Sig.(2-tailed) value for the difference between male and female students was 0.726, $p>.05$. Accordingly, there are no significant differences between male and female students in terms of their perception of change and continuity skill levels. Consequently, teachers should include activities for change and continuity skill in their lessons, and make up the deficiencies students have. Additionally, students' skills related to social sciences lesson should be investigated further with longer duration, more comprehensive studies, using different assessment instruments.

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SUMMARY

In order to understand the culture of the society they live in and themselves, individuals need to learn and internalise social sciences in relation to past, present and future. In the educational process, students can achieve this, by acquiring time, change and continuity as a skill. Knowledge and skills acquired especially in primary education, which is important for individuals' development period, form the basis for knowledge and skills to be acquired in other steps of education. In this context, Social Sciences education curriculum was changed and restructured in 2005. In the curriculum, 9 basic skills aimed to be acquired within lessons, and six social sciences specific skills were included. Six social sciences specific basic skills included in the curriculum are classified as; perception of time and chronology, social participation, perception of change and continuity, perception of place, and empathy. Of these skills, perception of change and continuity were separated in certain steps within Social Sciences curriculum. These steps are; finding similarities and differences, perceiving change and continuity, distinguishing between historical phenomena and interpretations, defining problems and their causes in the past, finding alternatives to the solution of a historical problem. Some of the previous studies on the skills included in Social Sciences curriculum in the literature are as follows. Safran and Şimşek investigated the effect of multimedia use in 7th grade social sciences lesson on acquisitions of time-chronology and change-continuity perceptions and attitude towards lesson. Çelikkaya studied teacher remarks on the acquisition of the skills in Social Sciences curriculum; while Karatekin, Sönmez and Kuş examined the factors affecting the communicative skills of primary school students.

The statement in Social sciences curriculum "It develops knowledge, concepts, values and skills, and prioritizes the learning" indicates that it aims to make students acquire knowledge in teaching step, and turn these into skills in the final process. In accordance with this purpose, the present research tried to define students' level of perception of change and continuity skill, which is aimed to be provided to secondary school students.

The present research adopted survey model, which is a quantitative research design, since it tries to define 7th grade students' level of perception of change and continuity skill in social sciences curriculum. The work group of the research was formed with 45 female, 35 male, a total of 80 7th grade students studying at secondary schools affiliated to Mugla Provincial Directorate of National Education in 2014-2015 education year spring semester.

In order to collect data, two units covering social sciences 7th grade perception of change and continuity skill were defined and a data collection of two parts was created. The literature was reviewed while preparing questions, and a 20-item achievement test covering perception of change and continuity skill was prepared in accordance with the objectives of "A Journey to Turkish History" unit. In order to collect profound data, five open-ended (unstructured) questions were also included in the data collection tool. For the content validity of the questions, the opinions of two social sciences teachers, a Turkish language teacher, and an academician studying the subject field were asked, and the questions were revised in accordance with their suggestions. A pilot implementation was conducted on a 40-student classroom for the reliability of the test. Analysis of the obtained data showed that reliability coefficient (KR20) was 0.78. Data obtained in the present research were analysed on SPSS. Arithmetic average scores were calculates in order to define 7th grade students' perception of change and continuity skill levels.

T-test was utilised in order to find out whether there were any significant differences in terms of gender variable.

According to data related to perception of change and continuity skill in social sciences lesson, students' average score on the achievement test for 25 questions was $X=0.65$. Considering that, highest score to get on the achievement test was $X=1.00$, more than half of the students were successful in performing perception of change and continuity skill. Safran and Şimşek studied 4th-8th grade students' historical time concept and the development of related skills. Their findings showed that, students had a medium level achievement in change and continuity concepts, and they had "perfect" success in expressing change with examples. Özen and Sağlam as well conducted an action research in order to define 7th grade students' perception of change and continuity. According to the findings of this research, students had difficulty in expressing change, but more than half of their participants were successful in the pictures related to change and continuity shown during the lesson.

According to average values related to in which step of change and continuity perception skill secondary school 7th grade students were more successful, change and continuity step had the highest average ($X=0.76$) according to the answers given by students. Therefore, the step of the skill in which the students had the highest score was perceiving change and continuity. The open-ended question asked to students for this step was "Compare and contrast Turkish culture today and Ottoman culture". Student coded S49's answer was "Today, we don't show love and respect to elderly. The reason for this is the upbringing". Student S10' reply "Today Mugla chimneys are still in use" was a sample for continuity.

The steps, in which the students were most successful following change and continuity, were "Discriminating between historical phenomena and interpretations" ($X=0.68$), and "Finding alternatives to the solution of a historical problem" ($X=0.68$). The step of perception of change and continuity in which students got the lowest average score was "Defining problems and their causes in the past" ($X=0.51$). According to t-test results for the comparison of secondary school 7th grade students' perception of change and continuity skill level scores across genders, perception of change and continuity skill score average of 33 male students was $X=0.64$, while average score for 47 female students, who participated in the present research was $X=0.66$. Sig.(2-tailed) value for the difference between male and female students was 0.726, $p>.05$. Accordingly, there are no significant differences between male and female students in terms of their perception of change and continuity skill levels.