

**PROBLEMS CONCERNED DURING THE APPLICATION OF THE SOCIAL STUDIES  
COURSE PROGRAM**

***SOSYAL BİLGİLER DERSİ PROGRAMININ UYGULANMASI SÜRECİNDE  
KARŞILAŞILAN SORUNLAR***

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research is to put forth teacher opinions related to the problems concerned during the application of Social Studies course program which is formed according to the constructivist learning approach. Scan model was used in this research. Study group of this research composes 120 Social Studies teachers who work at 36 secondary schools in Erzurum, Ağrı and Kars and Ardahan cities. Data of this research were gathered with the problems concerned during the application of Social Studies course in type of grading including Social Studies Teacher opinions which are 25 questions. These questions, which are 5 Likert type, are "Totally Agree", "Agree", "Undecided", "Disagree", "Totally Disagree". As a result of statistical analysis, it was located that Social Studies Teachers answered "I agree" level related to the following statements: "It is not possible to determine the topics and aims of the lesson with students since I am supposed to follow the topics and program specified by the Ministry." "Leaving the choice of topics and activities to the students precludes giving them full information." "Students do not have the opportunity to work together outside the class." "Parents aren't interested in students' studies." "It requires a long time to plan a lesson containing different activities." "I am not able to do some of the activities because of crowdedness of the classrooms."

**Key words:** Social Studies, program, issue

**ÖZ**

Bu çalışmanın amacı, yapılandırmaca öğrenme anlayışına göre şekillendirilen Sosyal Bilgiler dersi öğretim programının uygulanması sürecinde karşılaşılan sorunlara ilişkin öğretmen görüşlerini ortaya koymaktır. Bu çalışmada tarama modeli kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu, Erzurum, Ağrı ve Kars, Ardahan illerinde 36 ortaokulda görev yapan 120 Sosyal Bilgiler öğretmenleri oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmanın verileri, "tamamen katılıyorum, katılıyorum, kararsızım, katılmıyorum, hiç katılmıyorum" 5'li Likert tipindeki 25 maddelik Sosyal Bilgiler öğretmen görüşlerini içeren derecelendirme tipindeki sosyal bilgiler dersi programının uygulanması sürecinde karşılaşılan sorunlar (Doğan, 2010: 92) ile toplanmıştır. Yapılan istatistikî analizler sonucunda, Sosyal Bilgiler öğretmenlerinin "Bakanlık tarafından belirlenen konulara ve programa uymak zorunda olduğum için konuları ve dersin hedeflerini öğrencilerle belirlemek mümkün görünmüyor, "Konuların ve etkinliklerin seçiminin öğrencilere bırakılması, bilgilerin tam olarak verilmesini engeller", "Öğrencilerin ders dışında birlikte çalışma olanakları yok", "Veliler, öğrencilerin çalışmalarını ilgilenmiyor", "Farklı etkinlikler içeren bir dersi planlamak uzun zaman ayırmayı gerektiriyor", "Sınıfların kalabalıklığından dolayı bazı etkinlikleri yapamıyorum", yönelik "Katılıyorum" düzeyinde cevap verdikleri tespit edilmiştir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyal Bilgiler, program, sorun

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Social studies is an investment to the future of our country and our nation with its mission and vision to grow up good citizens in the first place. It constitutes assurance on behalf of the country and nation by raising awareness of points such as homeland, nation, state and so on, while making them internalize the concepts, values and abilities in the content of Social Studies. At the same time, it only makes it possible to overcome problems by having enough and qualified manpower who handle the information well and with an education system which catches up with the era and goes beyond it. Social Studies is one of the keystones of such an education system. For this reason, in Social Studies education, it is necessary to develop and carry out social education program, method and techniques and education technologies having contemporary criteria (Duru & Gürdal, 2002).

In recent years, significant changes and developments have occurred in the field of science and technology. These developments are a reflection of the importance of education and the importance of providing quality and equality in education. It is also necessary to increase the sensitivity of the economy and democracy, and to develop national and personal values in line with global values. In this context, a new program was prepared by the Ministry of National Education in 2004 in order to provide conceptual integrity by ensuring program integrity for basic education and to make the curriculum compatible with European Union standards (Dönmez & Yazıcı, 2015).

With the recognition of the deficiencies of traditional teaching approaches, new approaches have been sought and different teaching approaches have been introduced. Many teaching methods and techniques have been developed in order to make it easier to learn and to make the learned information more effective and useful. Cooperative learning, learning through invention, active learning, multiple intelligence theory, and problem based learning, brain storming, project based learning can be given as examples. Studies have shown that these methods have been tested for effectiveness and it is concluded that they are more effective than traditional teacher-centered approach most of the times. However, in the above-mentioned methods, some deficiencies were determined for the realization of an ideal learning, and a constant search was made to eliminate them, new theories were put forward and new teaching methods were tried (Doğan, 2010).

In the light of these studies, the concept of constructivist approach to learning in our country has been brought to the agenda in recent years and it has been decided that the programs applied in our schools should be shaped within this approach. The programs prepared with this approach based on the fact that the learners take an active role in the learning process and reach them with their own work under the guidance of the teacher were implemented as a pilot practice in 2004-2005 academic year. This has started to be implemented in all primary schools since 2005-2006 academic year (Doğan, 2010).

In general, constructivist learning is based on the fact knowledge and meaning are not passive as much as people's own behaviors are aimed to the purpose but they are constructivist (Cobb, 1994). The constructivist learning approach is against to assume all students to be the same and to speak to them in groups. Instead, it attaches importance to students' individual needs, their strengths and weaknesses, their memories and experiences. Instead of supporting competition amongst students, it tries to share their knowledge and responsibilities, as well as creating a class atmosphere based on mutual respect. The responsibility of learning is shared by the teacher and the student (Jonassen, 1994).

The constructivist learning approach is a philosophical approach that explains how an individual understands and learns. In the constructivist learning approach, learning becomes a constructive consequence factor in the human mind; that is, learning is an internal process that occurs in the mind of the individual (Yaşar, 1998). Constructivists indicate that acquiring knowledge is a high-level social aspect. An individual is not able learn the knowledge alone, he/she learns by communicating with others. In creative learning, knowledge is produced. Constructivists generally state that an individual should produce or rediscover the knowledge. Teachers should guide the students to rediscover scientific theories and historical events (Perkins, 1999). Therefore, in constructivist learning approach, every individual should be active in learning process and should be responsible of his/her learning. For this, teacher should use a variety of methods and problem solving based learning and strategies like project based learning, cooperative learning, case study more often. By this way, the role of the teacher is a guide, assistant or a pioneer who makes it easier for students to learn (Saban, 2004). Considering the attitudes and behaviors determined by Brooks&Brooks (1993), teacher who will carry put the program should have some qualities in order for the education program which is constituted on constructivist learning to be successful. A

teacher who adopts constructivist learning approach is a learner who is not only open minded, modern, self-renewable, takes into consideration personal differences and good at his/her field but also provide suitable learning environment (Seiley, 1999).

It is very important in terms of the future of the program that the curriculum should be followed up and applied as well as the preparation of the curriculum based on contemporary understandings. The points that program developers miss in sight, deficiencies of practitioners or problems in the application process may cause programs to miss the targeted success. Everyone related to the subject matter should take active part in the processes of planning, developing, and evaluating of teaching programs. However, the most important factor in the success of the program is the teachers who are the guide and executive of the program. Thus, it is crucial to consult with the teachers in the process of program development, application and evaluation (Doğan, 2010).

The executives of the program is school principals and teachers. During the application, it may not be possible to execute the program for some reasons or some factors which were not taken into consideration, may restrain the application of the program as it was foreseen. For these reasons, it is necessary to gather information about the execution process of the program in order to make judgement on the effectiveness of the program (Erden, 1998).

## **2. METHOD**

Model of the research, work group which the research conducted and data collecting, analysis of the data were included in this part of the study. In this study, scanning method is applied which aims to detect an existing situation with its latest feature and reveal main trends of the individuals by utilizing tools like scanning list, interview etc. (Kaptan, 1998). For this, data were collected by gathering Social Studies teachers' thoughts and views on application of new programs which were prepared based on constructivist approach.

### **2.1. Purpose of the Study**

In this study, data on students' statements which try to specify the problems teachers faced during application of the program and appeared in the second part of this study were used. The results of the questionnaires were examined one by one and checked once they were responded appropriately. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program was used for the statistical analysis of the data obtained from the teachers.

### **2.2. Suppositions**

All the Social Studies class teachers attending the study answered the questions correct.

### **2.3. Limitedness**

1<sup>st</sup> study is limited with 120 Social Studies class teachers who works in 36 schools in Erzurum, Ağrı, Kars and Ardahan in 2016-2017 academic year.

### **2.4. Collecting the Data**

The points in the determination scale about the problems which appeared in the application of Social Studies class program are in Likert type and graded as "[1] I totally disagree. [2] I disagree. [3] I partly agree. [4] I agree. [5] I totally agree." (Doğan, 2010:92). Secondary schools in which the study would be carried out in order to enlighten the problem statement were determined and then 120 Social Studies teachers were contacted in person and were informed of the topic.

## **3. FINDINGS and COMMENTS**

In this study, data which were obtained related to the problems which Social Studies teachers encountered while they were doing the activities which appeared in the new curriculum based on constructivist learning approach. In this part, there are findings which were obtained by data gathering tool and comments related to these findings.

Tablo 1. The Problems Encountered During the Implementation of Social Studies curriculum

The Problems Encountered During the Implementation of Curriculum	Strongly Agree (5)		Agree (4)		Undecided (3)		Disagree (2)		Strongly Disagree (1)		$\bar{X}$	n
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
1	25	20,83	63	52,5	13	10,08	16	13,33	2	1,66	2,20	120
2	44	36,6	68	56,6	4	3,3	3	2,5	1	0,83	1,72	120
3	36	30	69	57,5	3	2,5	10	8,3	2	1,6	1,9	120
4	23	19,1	71	59,1	11	9,1	14	11,6	1	0,83	2,15	120
5	15	12,5	59	49,1	36	30	8	6,6	2	1,6	2,35	120
6	32	26,6	63	52,5	11	9,1	12	10	2	1,6	2,07	120
7	37	30,8	57	47,5	7	5,8	15	12,5	4	3,3	2,1	120
8	4	3,3	23	19,1	13	10,0	70	58,3	10	8,3	3,49	120
9	5	4,1	19	15,8	13	10,0	79	65,8	4	3,3	3,48	120
10	4	3,3	17	14,1	19	15,8	76	63,3	4	3,3	3,49	120
11	2	1,6	19	15,8	27	22,5	67	55,8	4	3,3	3,42	120
12	33	27,5	71	59,1	7	5,8	8	6,6	1	0,83	2,21	120
13	32	26,6	53	44,1	13	10,0	19	15,8	3	2,5	2,23	120
14	6	5	17	14,1	20	16,6	69	57,5	8	6,6	3,46	120
15	9	7,5	27	22,5	33	27,5	47	39,1	4	3,3	2,91	120
16	6	5	18	15	34	28,3	59	49,1	3	2,5	3,29	120
17	5	4,1	21	17,5	19	15,8	68	56,6	7	5,8	3,42	120
18	23	19,1	57	47,5	21	17,5	18	15	2	1,6	2,35	120
19	35	29,6	65	54,1	8	6,6	10	8,3	2	1,6	1,99	120
20	49	40,8	57	47,5	3	2,5	9	7,5	2	1,6	1,84	120
21	14	11,6	35	29,1	13	10,0	53	44,1	5	4,1	3,10	120
22	8	6,6	13	10,0	11	9,1	71	59,1	17	14,1	3,63	120
23	31	25,8	65	54,1	13	10,0	10	8,3	1	0,83	2,04	120
24	11	9,1	31	25,8	21	17,5	41	34,1	16	13,3	3,16	120
25	9	7,5	18	15	14	11,6	68	56,6	11	9,1	3,45	120

According to the findings on Table 1, it is seen that teachers answered the following statements 2, 3 and 4 "I totally agree": "It takes too long to do different activities in the classroom", "Time is not enough to do the activities, which they do actively, for students for each class", "Class hours prevent to do some of the applications". In the light of these findings, it can be said that most of the teachers think that time shortage is a problem since time is not enough to do the different activities in which students are active in the classroom and these activities takes too much time.

According to the findings on Table 1, it is seen that teachers answered "I agree" to these following problems which were stated in the articles 1, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 23: "It is not possible to determine the topics and aims of the lesson with students since I am supposed to follow the topics and program specified by the Ministry", "Leaving the choice of topics and activities to the students precludes giving them full information", "Students do not have the opportunity to work together outside the class", "Parents aren't interested in students' studies" "It requires a long time to plan a lesson containing different activities", "I am not able to do some of the activities because of crowdedness of the classrooms", "It is a time consuming and tiring process to assess students by using different methods throughout a year", "Lack of maps, atlas, globe prevent to do some of the activities", "Classrooms are not physically suitable to do some of the activities", "Students are not able to reach different information resources".

The teachers answered "I disagree" to the problems which were stated in the articles 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 24, 25 from the findings on Table 1: "I don't have enough information on different activities", "Resources from which I can get information about different activities are insufficient", "I don't know how to assess a lesson carried out with different activities", "Students are not volunteer to take part in different activities", "While doing some of the activities, high volume in the classroom disturbs school administration", "School administrators do not have enough experience of curriculum", "It is meaningless I only do different activities unless other teachers do different activities", "I do not have information about applying different testing and assessment methods", "I am not able to use resources like computer, magazine, book because of economic inefficiencies", "I do not have access to technology", "Students do not have access to different information resources", "There are few libraries which I would want my students to go".

From the data on Table 1, it can be reached that Social Studies teachers have enough information to do different activities, students are volunteer to attend in different activities, school administrations provide necessary help to the teachers to do different activities, testing and assessment is done correctly, there is no problem in accessing resources such as computer, magazines, books, there are sufficient libraries around which students can go.

#### 4. CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

Social Studies class, which is life itself, is one of the classes which is student based and one of the easiest class to make dramatization and to connect daily life with the events. Considering this point, it will be more efficient to reduce abstract subjects and number of topics in terms of relating the lesson with daily life. Social Studies Class Teaching Program should be based on the approach which supports and improves one's to take part in life effectively and to solve problems by taking into consideration the value that he/she carries and his/her existing experiences rather than total behaviorist approaches (Çakan, 2004; Aydın, 2005; Erdal, 2007; Çalık, 2007; Orbeyi, 2007; Çakır and Çimer, 2007; Gömleksiz and Bulut, 2007). This class should be conducted student centered, balancing the knowledge and ability, providing the opportunity to interact with the environment by taking into consideration his/her own living and personal differences.

According to the conclusions of this study, Social Studies teachers accepts these points are problems in the application of the program: time is not enough to do the activities, ministry determines the program and subjects, leaving the choice of subjects and activities to students, students do not have opportunity to work together outside class, parents are not interested in students' studies, it takes a long time to plan a class which has different activities, crowdedness of the classrooms, it is time taking and tiring to assess, insufficient materials like maps, atlas, globe etc., physical insufficiencies of the classrooms, cancelling field trips because of inabilities, students are unable to access different information resources and insufficient libraries.

It is revealed that teachers use testing and assessment methods in which they consider themselves sufficient more often. Half of the teacher has no trouble in using testing methods and those who have troubles, consider the crowdedness of the classrooms, time shortage and not easy to prepare as problems.

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