The nation's future success lies with science and education!

Heydar Aliyev
National Leader of Azerbaijan

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1. Zoological Record

Necdet Konan, Vuslat Oguz, Ali Kis
TEACHERS' VIEWS OF THEIR LEVEL OF VISITING WEBSITES....125

Umit Deniz, Omer Rifki Onder, Aysel Tufekci
THE VIEWS OF CANDIDATE TEACHERS OVER THEIR GUIDANCE TO THEIR STUDENTS REGARDING SEXUALITY....137

S. Sunay Yildirim Dogru
THE EFFICACY OF ATTENTION TRAINING ON UPSKILLING THE CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO NOTICE DETAILS AND ATTENTION FOCUSING SKILLS....143

Ding Hooi Ting
ENRICHING PRODUCT BENEFITS THROUGH REPRESENTATION....150

Mustafa Şeker
EXAMINATION OF THE WAYS THE MATERIALS CONCERNING HISTORIC AND CULTURAL ASSETS IN SOCIAL STUDIES TEXTBOOKS ARE PRESENTED....157

Ayla Arseven
THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROCESS....166

Deniz Tonga, Bulent Aksoy
EVALUATION OF THE PATRIOTIC ATTITUDES OF THE PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS ACCORDING TO VARIOUS VARIABLES....172

Naciye Cavus Kasik, Hatice Kumcagiz
THE EFFECTS OF THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEER MEDIATION TRAINING PROGRAM ON SELF-ESTEEM AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS....179

Shariff Bin M. Haniff, Mohd Suberi Bin Ab Halim
MARKETING CAPABILITIES AND PERFORMANCE OF SMEs IN FOOD AND BEVERAGES INDUSTRY IN MALAYSIA....187

Isik Bayraktar, Gokhan Deliceoglu, Metin Yaman
EXAMINATION OF THE NORMATIVE VALUES OF TURKISH ADOLESCENCE TRACK AND FIELD ATHLETES....196

Oguz Serdar Kesicioglu
OBSERVING THE OPINIONS OF THE COMPUTER USAGE OF PARENTS' PRESCHOOL PERIOD CHILDREN....203

Sri Yulianty Mozin, Amir Imbaruddin
THE REFUNCTION OF ADMINISTRATION IN IMPROVING THE SERVICE OF ALOEI SABOE HOSPITAL GORONTALO INDONESIA....209

Osman Titrek, Mahmut Polatcan, Demet Zafer Gunes, Gozde Sezen
THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EQ), ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE (OJ), ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR (OCB)....213

Işıl Sönmez Ektem, Sayime Erben Keçici
METACOGNITIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES OF THE TEACHER CANDIDATES....221

A.M.Rivai, Amir Imbaruddin, Murtir Jeddawi, Fakhri Kahar
IMPLICATIONS CHANGES OF SUB-DISTRICT ORGANIZATION FROM GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION TO WORK AREA OF SUB-DISTRICT VIEWED FROM ASPECTS OF SUB-DISTRICT LEADERSHIP IN GOWA....227

Gurkan Yilmaz
THE CORRELATION BETWEEN NUTRITION AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' SELF-EFFICACY....232

Murtaza Aykac
THE VALUES ADOPTED BY INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CREATIVE DRAMA EDUCATION....240

Murat Korkmaz, Nurhayat Celebi, Ali Serdar Yucel
PRACTICAL REVIEW OF THE PLACE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS IN OUR DAILY LIFE AND THEIR EFFECT ON TODAY'S YOUTH....250

Angelo Pellegrini, Elena-Nicoleta Bordea
THE SEVERITY OF THE DEPRESSION RELATED TO THE DEPRESSIVE ANTECEDENTS AT THE UNEMPLOYED PERSONS AND EMPLOYEES....262

Erdal Hamarta
AN ANALYSIS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' INTERPERSONAL PROBLEM SOLVING APPROACHES WITH RESPECT TO THEIR PERFECTIONISM....271

M. Seker. Examination of the ways the materials concerning historic and cultural assets in social studies textbooks are presented. International Journal of Academic Research Part B; 2014; 6(1), 157-165. ***DOI:*** *10.7813/2075-4124.2014/6-1/B.22*

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EXAMINATION OF THE WAYS THE MATERIALS CONCERNING HISTORIC AND CULTURAL ASSETS IN SOCIAL STUDIES TEXTBOOKS ARE PRESENTED

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ABSTRACT

Textbook is the course material that is the easiest to access in practice both for students and teachers. There are studies suggesting that the quality of the written and visual elements in textbooks directly affect the permanence factor in learning. In the literature concerning social studies education and Social Studies Curriculum the importance of using effective course materials for ensuring the maximum level of attainment of historic and cultural values is emphasized. In the present study, the presentation of the historic and cultural elements in 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grade Social Studies textbooks is examined. This is a qualitative study that used the document review method. Within the scope of the study it was determined that the materials (pictures, photographs, figures, texts, etc.) concerning the historic and cultural assets included in the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grade social studies textbooks are not used at an effective and adequate level for realizing the attainment set forth by the curriculum and that the elements such as pictures, photographs and figures are only given prominence in visual terms. It was also determined that these visual materials are not supported with an adequate level of introductory and informatory elements, and that even for the most effective visuals the informative texts are too short and inadequate. In addition to all these, it was observed that the ways of presenting the historic and cultural elements in the textbooks of publishers A and B are not in parallel with the intended program attainments. On the other hand, while the topics and elements concerning historic/cultural assets are presented in 3 to 4 separate units in the textbook of a publishing house, the same topics and elements are presented in a single unit in the textbook of the other publishing house. Realization of an adequate level of knowledge and value attainment concerning historic and cultural elements from textbooks, as the most important material of the learning process, is essential in schools where planned and effective learning takes place. Accordingly, a higher level of attention to be paid by all educational stakeholders to the preparation of educational materials, particularly of social studies textbooks that embody historic and cultural values, and designing such materials in line with students' learning needs may be effective in raising individuals that know their own history and culture better.

Key words: Social Studies, Textbook, Historic Assets, Cultural Assets, Social Studies Curriculum, Attainment

1. INTRODUCTION

With the amendments made in the years of 1924, 1926, 1936, 1948, 1962, 1968, 1998 and 2005, the curriculum of social studies was transformed from a teacher-centered behavioral approach to its current constructivism-based, student-centered approach. In this process, important changes took place at paradigm level and it was anticipated that with these changes the "students will become qualified citizens" by means of the Social Studies course based on "cultural transmission" (Ozturk, 2004). Assigning the task of transferring social values to future generations to the social studies course and regulating the cultural and historic accumulation of nations by synthesis with other disciplines of social sciences has constituted the present content of social studies curriculums.

According to Sozer (1998) and Sonmez (1999), the bases of the social studies course reaches back to the early times of Turkish history. It is observed that the Turks had taught their children some rules and knowledge on social life, and with their embrace of Islam they rearranged the teaching of Turkish traditions within the frame of the principles of Islam. With the consideration of all these in terms of social sciences, Akdag and Kaymakci (2011) conclude that the traditions, as the requirements of social life, have been taught to individuals for educational purposes both before and after embracing Islam throughout the Turkish history (Akpinar and Kaymakci, 2012). This understanding was adopted in all levels of life from architecture to all life styles, and the values of the Turkish society were reflected on the works set forth in various fields. Accordingly, selecting the materials concerning historic and cultural values presented in social studies textbooks in line with curriculum attainments with the consideration of the historic accumulation of thousands of years is an essential requirement.

The textbooks prepared according to the current Social Studies Curriculum have many differences than the previous books in terms of content. Besides the differences in topics, also the way topics are presented has changed completely. Naturally, this originates from the changes made in the social sciences curriculum that was renewed in 2004. The most important aspect of the changes in social studies textbooks is the presentation of topics. The "plain and informative texts" used in older textbooks are used rarely in the new books. This is due to the implementation of the constructivist approach in the curriculum. According to this approach, information is not transferred directly and topics are presented within the frame of various setups (Oruc, 2009).

In the Directive on the Examination and Evaluation of Educational Tools published in the 2589 numbered 2006 Official Bulletin of the Turkish Ministry of National Education, it was stipulated that textbooks shall bear the following qualities. Textbooks embody reading texts that support students in terms of national, moral, spiritual and cultural values, that guide them in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities to the Turkish Republic as a democratic, secular and social state of law and that makes the course topics related with these values enjoyable. They cover democracy, human rights and cultural and universal values. They cover the values, attitudes and qualifications aimed to be brought in. They develop and sustain the social, moral, cultural and historic values of the Turkish society.

The textbooks of the Social Studies course, to which the task of transferring cultural values and assets to future generations is assigned in Turkey, is being taught in schools following the examination and approval of the Turkish Education Board.

2. METHOD

Purpose of the Study

Within the scope of the present study, it was aimed to examine the presentation of the elements concerning historic and cultural assets in the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grade Social Studies textbooks being currently taught in schools with the approval of the Turkish Education Board, and published by two separate publishing houses (publishing houses A and B). In addition, particular emphasize was given to the suggestions concerning the probable inadequacies that may be determined at the end of the study.

Method of the Study

In the study, the contents of the textbooks prepared in line with the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grade social studies curriculums were examined. The study was conducted with the document review method within the frame of qualitative study model. The document review method used in this study is a qualitative method used for analyzing some printed material such as published books, journals etc., as well as any other artistic works such as pictures, movies etc. This method was preferred due to its suitability with the purpose of the study (Karasar, 2008; Yildirim and Simsek, 2005). In addition, this is a case study and therefore aims to determine the current case concerning the presentation of historic and cultural values in social studies textbooks.

Data Collection

For collecting the data within the scope of the study, the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grade social studies textbooks published by different publishing houses (MEB Press, Altın Press, Anıttepe Press, Pasifik Press, Tuna Press) and approved by the Turkish Education Board were used. The units presented in the textbooks in line with the curriculum were examined and the data concerning the historic and cultural assets in these units were collected.

3. FINDINGS

The presentation ways of the elements concerning "Historic and Cultural Assets" in the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grade Social Studies textbooks published by publishing houses A (MEB Press) and B (Altın Press, Anıttepe Press, Pasifik Press, Tuna Press) were examined. According to this;

It is observed that the "Historic and Cultural Assets" in the 4th grade social studies textbooks published by the publishing houses A and B are particularly presented in the 2nd, 5th and 8th units. Concerning the discussed topics several explanations supported by pictures and photographs are provided. An example of the physical assets concerning "Historic and Cultural Assets" provided in Unit 2 in both textbooks is presented below.



Fig. 1. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 2nd unit of the 4th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house A*


Bir gün geldi benim de böyle bir sandığım oldu. Annem kendi çeyizinin bir bölümünü bana verdi. Bu arada ben de danteller işleyip iğne oyalarını yaptım. Renk renk nakışlı yün çoraplar ördüm. Havlular, çarşaflar ve örtüler biriktirerek çeyizimi hazırladım.

Elifçiğim, çeyiz sandığı pek çok geleneği de beraberinde yaşatırdı. Bunların başında çeyiz serme geleneği gelirdi. Çeyiz serme geleneğine göre gelinin çeyizi düğünden birkaç gün önce kız evinde sergiye çıkarılırdı. Böylece mahallenin genç kızları ve kadınları yeni gelinin çeyizini görme fırsatı bulurdu.

Çeyiz serme geleneği günümüzde de devam etmektedir.

Fig.2. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 2nd unit of the 4th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B*

The photograph provided in the "Our Clocks" titled 5th Unit of the 4th grade social studies textbooks prepared by the publishing houses A and B, exhibits the presentation of an element belonging to the Turkish culture. In this unit, the phases an historic and cultural element has gone through from the past till now were examined and the physical elements of culture were presented in line with the understanding of time dependent change. Explanations concerning the content of the provided pictures were presented and further clarification on the topic of the unit was given. As an example of the way historic and cultural assets are discussed the following picture was presented.


Saatlerimiz

Güneşin doğmasını ve batmasını gözlemleyen insanlar gece ve gündüz kavramlarını kullanmaya başlamışlardır. Yapılacak işlerin gece ve gündüz içindeki zamanlara paylaştırılması ihtiyacı saatlerin icat edilmesini sağlamıştır.

Yüzyıllar boyunca en yaygın olarak kullanılan saat güneş saati olmuştur. Bu saat güneşin hareketine göre zamanı belirler, güneşin oluşturduğu gölgeyi ölçer. Bu yüzden güneş saatleri ancak bol güneşli ülkelerde ve gündüzleri kullanılmıştır.

Erzurum Şeyhler Cami üzerinde bulunan güneş saati

Su saatleri, dibinde delik olan su dolu bir kabın boşalmasıyla zamanı gösteriyordu. Suyun boşalmaya başlamasından tamamen boşalıncaya kadar geçen süreyi gösteren bu saatler bulutlu havalarda da çalışıyordu. Ancak suyun akışını belli bir tempoda tutmak çok zor olduğundan zamanla bu saatlerin hatalı ölçüm yaptığı anlaşıldı.

Resimde ilk su saatlerinden birini görüyorsunuz. www.physics.nist.gov

Fig. 3. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 5th unit of the 4th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house A*


Saat olmasaydı insanlar günlük hayatlarında hangi sorunlarla karşılaşırlardı?

Ders kitabınızdaki "Geçmişimi Öğreniyorum" ünitesini hatırladınız mı? O ünitedeki "Ailemin Tarihi" başlığı altında Elif ile babaannesi arasında geçen konuşma yer alıyordu. Bu konuşma sırasında Elif, dedesinden kalan bir cep saati olduğunu öğrenmişti. Demek ki saat yalnız günümüzde değil, geçmişte de kullanılmıştır. Bugün bazı şehirlerimizin meydanlarını süsleyen tarihî saat kuleleri de bunu kanıtlamaktadır. Yanda bu saat kulelerimizden birini görüyorsunuz.

Çanakkale'deki saat kulesi

Fig. 4. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 5th unit of the 4th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B*

It was observed that various elements belonging to the Turkish culture were included in the "My Friend Far Away" titled 8th Unit of the 4th grade social studies textbooks prepared by the publishing houses A and B. An exemplary photograph concerning the cuisine culture of the Uzbek Turks is presented below within the scope of examples given from various cultures of the world. In addition, the similarities between the Uzbek Turks and the people of the Anatolia were emphasized within the content of the topic. An example related with the topic is presented below.



Fig. 5. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 8th unit of the 4th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house A*



Fig. 6. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 8th unit of the 4th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B*

Historic and cultural elements were also included in the 5th grade social studies textbook prepared by the publishing house A. Materials such as pictures, photographs and figures are provided in the "Handicraft" part of the 2nd Unit titled "Step by Step Turkey". It was also determined that the materials such as pictures, photographs and figures are supported by brief explanatory information in line with the expected unit attainments. An exemplary figure provided in line with unit attainments is presented below.



Fig. 7. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 2nd unit of the 5th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house A*

Among the units of the 5th grade social studies textbook there is a unit particularly concerning the "historic and cultural heritage" theme. Historic and cultural elements were included in the 5th grade social studies textbook prepared by the publishing house A. With the historic and cultural elements presented within the scope of the 8th unit with the title "The World of Everybody", particularly physical cultural assets were provided with brief explanations on their characteristics. Also in the part titled as "The World's Treasures", physical cultural assets from past till now are presented with explanations.



Fig. 8. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 8th unit of the 5th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house A*

In the units of the 5th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B, some instances of "historic and cultural assets" are provided. The concentration of the historic and cultural elements of Turkey in the "Step by Step Turkey" titled 2nd unit is prominent. It is observed that the tangible cultural assets are frequently used especially in this unit and these elements are presented in a comparative way throughout different periods. Examples of these are provided below. The following picture is taken from the chapter titled as "Beautiful, Beautiful Turkey".



Fig. 9. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 2nd unit of the 5th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B*

In the units of the 5th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B, some instances of "historic and cultural assets" are provided. The concentration of the historic and cultural elements of Turkey in the "Let's Learn about Our Region" titled 3rd unit is prominent. It is observed that the tangible cultural assets are frequently used especially in this unit and these elements are presented in a comparative way throughout different periods. Examples of these are provided below.



Fig. 10. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 3rd unit of the 5th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B*

In the units of the 5th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B, some instances of "historic and cultural assets" are provided. In the 4th unit titled "What We Produce", historic and cultural assets are conveyed while introducing the regions of Turkey. An exemplary material from the textbook is presented below.



Fig. 11. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 4th unit of the 5th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B*

In the units of the 5th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B, some instances of "historic and cultural assets" are provided. Within the scope of the part "Does Technology Affect Our Lives" in the 5th Unit "Dreams Coming True", historic and cultural elements were presented and compared with today's assets. An example of the historic and cultural elements in the textbook is presented below.



Fig. 12. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 5th unit of the 5th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B*

In the units of the 6th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house A, some instances of "historic and cultural assets" are provided. The changes and development of the elements of the Turkish Culture are presented in the part "From Motherland to Anatolia" in the 3rd unit titled as "Turks on the Silk Road". Concerning the way topics are presented, although various pictures photographs and figures were used, adequate information supporting such elements was not provided. An exemplary material is presented below.



Fig. 13. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 3rd unit of the 6th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house A*

In the 3rd unit of the 6th grade social studies textbook prepared by the publishing house B, the change and development of the elements of Turkish Culture are presented. Concerning the way the topics are discussed, it was observed that although several pictures, photographs and figures are used, these were not adequately supported with informative text.



Fig. 14. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 3rd unit of the 6th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B*

In the units of the 7th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house A, some instances of "historic and cultural assets" are provided. In the 3rd unit with the title "Travel through the Turkish History" the changes and developments of the elements of the Turkish Culture within time are presented. Concerning the way topics are presented, although various pictures photographs and figures were used, adequate information supporting such elements was not provided. An exemplary material is presented below.



Fig. 15. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 3rd unit of the 7th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house A*

In the "Economy and Social Life" titled 5th unit of the 7th grade social studies textbook prepared by the publishing house A, changes and developments of the elements of the Turkish Culture within time are set forth. Concerning the way topics are presented, although various pictures photographs and figures were used, adequate information supporting such elements was not provided. An exemplary material is presented below.

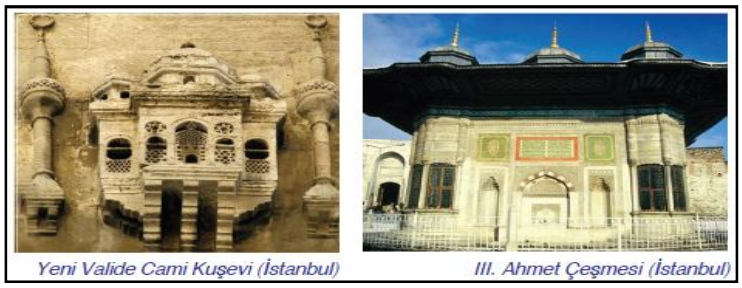


Fig. 16. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 5th unit of the 7th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house A*

In the "Travel Through the Turkish History" titled 3rd unit of the 7th grade social studies textbook prepared by the publishing house B, changes and developments of the elements of the Turkish Culture within time are set forth. Concerning the way topics are presented, although various pictures photographs and figures were used, adequate information supporting such elements was not provided. An exemplary material is presented below.



Fig. 17. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 3rd unit of the 7th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B*

In the "Economy and Social Life" titled 5th unit of the 7th grade social studies textbook prepared by the publishing house B, changes and developments of the elements of the Turkish Culture within time are set forth. Concerning the way topics are presented, although various pictures photographs and figures were used, adequate information supporting such elements was not provided. An exemplary material is presented below.



Fig. 18. *An example of the physical cultural assets presented in the 5th unit of the 7th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B*

4. DISCUSSION, RESULTS AND SUGGESTIONS

The presentation ways of the elements concerning "Historic and Cultural Assets" in the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grade Social Studies textbooks published by publishing houses A (MEB, 2012) and B (Altın, 2011; Anıttepe, 2011; Pasifik, 2011; Tuna, 2012) were examined. According to this;

It is observed that the "Historic and Cultural Assets" in the 4th grade social studies textbooks published by the publishing houses A and B are particularly presented in the 2nd, 5th and 8th units. It was observed that, although the materials concerning historic and cultural elements are provided in these units, adequate informative and introductory information concerning the pictures, photographs and figures are missing. For instance, it was determined that no information was provided along with pictures of a palace or a social complex, concerning the function of such elements.

Examining the 5th grade social studies textbooks showed that currently there are two textbooks prepared by two different publishing houses being taught, and that the topics concerning historic and cultural elements are presented in different units in the two different books. Historic and cultural elements were included in the 5th grade social studies textbook prepared by the publishing house A. Materials such as pictures, photographs and figures are provided in the "Handicraft" part of the 2nd Unit titled "Step by Step Turkey". It was also determined that the materials such as pictures, photographs and figures are supported by brief explanatory information in line with the expected unit attainments. According to this, it was observed that while the historic and cultural elements in the textbook prepared by the publishing house A are focused on in a single unit, in the textbook published by the publishing house B these topics are distributed to the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th units. Concerning the attainments aimed by the social studies curriculum at this point, the differences in the way the textbooks present the topics is interesting. It is also worth consideration that while visual materials are used frequently in both textbooks, the information provided with the visual materials are lacking.

In the units of the 6th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house A, some instances of "historic and cultural assets" are provided. The changes and development of the elements of the Turkish Culture are presented in the part "From Motherland to Anatolia" in the 3rd unit titled as "Turks on the Silk Road". Concerning the way topics are presented, although various pictures photographs and figures were used, adequate information supporting such elements was not provided. Similarly it was also determined that the visual

materials used in the 3rd unit of the 6th grade social studies textbook published by the publishing house B are not adequately supported by informative texts, and therefore the topics are not presented in an adequate and effective way in terms of the intended attainments.

In the units of the 7th grade social studies textbooks published by the publishing houses A and B, some instances of "historic and cultural assets" are provided. It was observed that the topics in line with curriculum attainments are presented in the 3rd and the 5th units respectively titled as "Travel Through the Turkish History" and "Economy and Social Life", and that the visual materials are distributed to the units. In the units, Turkish History is presented in a brief way starting from Asia to the Ottoman Empire period. Simple information on some historical personage are presented and topics are supported with visual materials. It was also determined that the provided historic/cultural assets are mostly the elements indicating architectural styles, and information concerning bows, arrows, swords, life styles and tools used by the public are lacking.

Although it has started to be recommended by social studies instructors to include literary elements in teaching (Mcgowan, T. and Guzzetti, B., 2003), it was understood that some elements such as true stories and biographies, which take an important place in the teaching and learning methods of history courses, were not adequately utilized in the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grade social studies textbooks. Also considering the way the topics are presented, it was observed that although several forms of visuals such as pictures, photographs and figures were used, adequate and effective informative texts supporting the visual elements are mostly missing. Focusing on topics such as cultural heritage, human activities of the past, present and future with their social, political and economic aspects, social problems, critical thinking and valuation (Michaelis and Garcia, 1996), the course of Social Studies undertakes a highly important mission to teach historic and cultural values to students starting from the first step of their education life. The teaching materials and their qualities are as important as the importance of the teachers as the architects of qualified learning environments. Among these materials, textbooks are the most easily accessible materials both for teachers and students. Because textbooks are provided free of charge by the Ministry of National Education at the start of every educational year. However, it is also vital for such easily accessible course materials to have high quality content. Preparation of the content of social studies textbooks in a careful way may be effective in the healthy transmission of the historic and cultural heritage to future generations. The elements presented in textbooks should be selected in line with the learning perceptions and levels of students, visual elements should be fully explained with adequate information and targeted topics should be presented to the student in ways that will attract interest. Topics included in units should be enriched with stories and biographies along with visual elements and slices of life of important historical personages should be provided. The topics that are to be prepared in line with the targeted attainments should be presented with rich content, should not be too short, incomprehensible and higher or lower than the students' levels, and the ever changing time and conditions should be taken into consideration.

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