

# Teachers' viewpoints on the content of social studies textbooks prepared in accordance with 2018 curriculum revision\*<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' opinions on the contents of the fifth, sixth, and seventh-grade social studies textbooks. Designed as a qualitative case study, this research employs 25 social studies teachers working in the province of Tokat and having at least 5 years of professional experience. A semi-structured interview form consisting of six questions aiming to reveal various aspects of the textbooks such as accuracy, harmony, density, suitability for the level of the student, language, and expression of the content. The content analysis method was used in the analysis of the data. At the end of the research, the participants directed some criticisms to the social studies textbooks in terms of information inaccuracies, inconsistency between themes, content density, unsuitability for the level of the students, and deficiencies in language and expression. When the textbooks prepared by the Ministry of National Education are compared with those of the private publishers, it is seen that the teachers emphasize more disadvantages of the textbooks prepared by the Ministry of National Education.

## Keywords:

Social Studies Teaching, Textbook Content, Teacher Opinions.

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## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Educational activities can be described as a challenging process affected by many variables. One of these variables is undoubtedly textbooks (Çelik, 2017). Textbooks to be used in educational institutions of all types and degrees are printed works that are prepared according to pre-determined rules and criteria in line with the content stipulated by the relevant curriculum (Canerik, 2009; Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2004). Since the textbooks aiming to facilitate the self-learning of students in the same age group (MoNE, 2004) have different components, their preparation processes require the cooperation of experts in different fields (Çelik, 2017).

Textbooks are the educational materials in which the behaviors that the state desires to see in the individuals it wants to raise are concretely manifested (Alabaş, 2018; Yazıcı & Yıldırım, 2018). Therefore, they are prepared under state policies and national interests (Pamuk & Pamuk, 2016; Yazıcı & Yazıcı, 2010). For this aim to be realized, some legal processes and control mechanisms must have proceeded during the textbook preparation process. In our country, the Regulation on Textbooks and Educational Tools by the Ministry of National Education is accepted in this regard and emphasizes that the textbooks to be taught in formal and non-formal education institutions should be prepared per the general-purpose and basic principles of the Turkish National Education (Çelik, 2017). The relevant bodies to control whether the determining criteria are fulfilled first examine the prepared textbooks (Canerik, 2017). After the preliminary examination process, the draft form of the textbook is evaluated through the panels. These draft textbooks passed by the panel board are ready to be published (Doğan & Tuğ, 2017).

It is normal for the textbooks used in the educational setting to change depending on time, place, scientific-technological developments, etc. (Ulusoy & Gülüm, 2009). In addition, a change in the program necessitates the renewal of the current textbooks. Programs containing answers to such questions as to why, how, to whom and when should we teach what is wanted to be taught about a course are updated according to the needs of the era and in line with the goals of the countries (Çimen-Kurt, 2017). In Turkey, this process is experienced quite frequently, as the school curricula have been renewed twice (2005, 2017) and updated once (2018) in the last twenty years (Turan, 2018).

According to the Board of Education (BoE), there are many reasons for the renewal of curricula in the country. The rapid and continuous change in socio-cultural life, science, and technology has triggered changes in the needs of society and individuals. This change has naturally necessitated the preparation of curricula that would meet the needs of the individual and society, and accordingly the preparation of textbooks (BoE, 2017). The need for updating the program in the field of social studies teaching, which is the subject of this research, is related to the change and development in every field (economic, social, scientific). As it can be understood from the statements above, criticisms of, previous programs reveal the need for updating (Canerik, 2017).

Upon the changes in the curricula in 2018, some changes in the social studies textbooks became mandatory, and textbooks suitable for the new programs were prepared. When the studies on social studies textbooks prepared after 2018 are examined, some developments draw attention. The first one of these is about values education. When the comparative programs are examined, 5 values were added to the section related to values education in the Social Studies Program in the 2018 change, and 18 values were included. Besides, the 2018 program has become a program in which "course-specific values" are determined (MoNE, 2018). This situation was also reflected in the social studies textbooks, and a lot of richness in the name of values education was added to the new textbooks (Kapkın, Çalışkan & Sağlam, 2018). In research by Turan (2018), the design of assessment and evaluation sections of new textbooks according to contemporary methods stands out as a positive change. It is thought that the use of such modern assessment tools as a structured grid, meaning analysis table, mind map, diagnostic branched tree, performance evaluation, etc. make the assessment and evaluation sections functional.

Despite the positive developments mentioned above, some negative criticisms have also been made of the new social studies textbooks. For instance, in the study conducted by İşbilir (2019), the teachers stated that social studies textbooks did not mention some important issues. In this case, the content of the textbooks was not considered sufficient during the preparation for the Scholarship Exam (SE) and the High School Entrance Exam (HSEE), and students and parents were directed to the supplementary resources published by private publishing companies (Palaz, Çepni & Kılcan, 2019). The fact that the evaluation sections in the textbooks are not sufficient to comprehend the content has also increased the need for additional resources (Nur-İnce, 2019).

It has been stated that textbooks, which are expected to be error-free in terms of grammar, have many problems related to spelling, punctuation, and expression (Nur-İnce, 2019). Also, it has been revealed by the news in the national media or by different research results that the visuals used in the textbooks do not meet the content or are not suitable (Milliyet, 2019) and that the suitable images or the design of the book, in general, are far from attracting the attention of the students (İşbilir, 2019).

The positive or negative criticisms on the social studies textbooks prepared after 2018 indicate that the relevant textbooks are a study field worth examining and doing more research on. It is observed that some of the studies carried out so far have focused on the 2018 Social Studies Program (Esemen, 2020; Şen, 2019; Turan & Karasu-Avcı, 2018). In addition, it is comprehended that some of these studies have examined the textbooks, which have been prepared after 2018, within the framework of such themes as skills (Altay, 2020; Demir & Özyurt, 2021; Şanlı, 2020) values (Seçgin & Kapan, 2020), gender (Karaboğa, 2020; Sönmez & Dikmenli, 2021) measurement and evaluation (Oran & Karalı, 2019), textbook design (Subaşı, 2020), visual-text relationship (Çakmak & Kaçar, 2020), disability (Mengi, 2019), map use (Ünal & Özkaral, 2019), and travel book use (Yancı & Evcı, 2021). Some studies have also focused on certain grade levels (Altay, 2020; Kandilli, 2020; Kayacan, 2021; Oran & Karalı, 2019). In this study, social studies textbooks used at the secondary school level have been handled as a whole and examined through the opinions of social studies teachers who have had the opportunity to experience them so far. In the study, it is purposed that the participants evaluate the social studies textbooks in terms of knowledge, the harmony of the themes, the density of the content, the suitability for the student level, language, and expression, and in this sense, that they compare the textbooks prepared by the Ministry of National Education and private publishing companies.

## **METHOD**

A case study, one of the qualitative research designs, was applied in this study, which aims to examine the views of teachers about the textbooks prepared according to the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum. Case studies are studies in which what is described as a situation (such as an individual, event, subject, and phenomenon) is examined in-depth (Mcmillan & Schumacher, 2010). The type of case study implemented in this research is the descriptive case study, which purposes to reveal what is considered a situation in a detailed and realistic way.

### **Study Group**

The study group of the research consists of 25 social studies teachers working in public and private secondary schools in the center, districts, and villages of Tokat province. Of the 25 teachers, 13 are female, and 12 are male. The age range of teachers varies between 27 and 46. The working experiences of these teachers are between 6 and 23 years. Attention was paid to the fact that the teachers in the study group had at least five years of experience to be able to compare different textbooks. Due to this determining criterion, the study group was formed through the criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods. The identity information of the participants in the study was hidden, and they were coded as "P1, P2, P3, ...P25".

### Data Collection Tools and Process

A semi-structured interview form was utilized to collect data in this study. The data collection instrument was generated by the researchers, and then the questions were re-arranged in terms of clarity by taking expert opinion from a faculty member who is an expert in the field of social studies teaching and five social studies teachers. Then, a pilot study was conducted by applying the data collection instrument to 5 different social studies teachers, and one of the questions was removed from the interview form. Thus, the interview form, which was given its final form, consists of six questions aiming to reveal the opinions of the teachers on the accuracy of the information in the content of the social studies textbooks, the harmony of the content, its density, its suitability for the student level, and language and expression. Then, Ethics Committee Approval and research permission were respectively obtained from the relevant Directorate of National Education to apply the data collection instrument. The interviews were conducted in the form of online interviews due to the pandemic. The duration of the interviews were between 33 and 75 minutes.

### Data Analysis

The content analysis method was applied in this study while analyzing the data. Content analysis is a systematic and repeatable method that enables the conversion of texts consisting of many words into content categories based on certain rules (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013). In this study, by getting the permission of the participants, whereas some of the interviews were recorded as audio recordings, some of them were recorded as a video. The obtained answers were transcribed and converted into a 37-page Word file. Then, the data were analyzed within the framework of themes and sub-themes, and these themes and sub-themes were explained by making direct quotations from the statements of the participants.

### Research Ethics

This research was carried out with the approval of Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Ethics Committee for Researches on Social Sciences and Humanities with the decision numbered "01-10" in the session dated 21.05.2020.

## FINDINGS

Five different questions about the problems encountered in the content of the social studies textbooks, aiming to evaluate the textbooks in terms of information inaccuracy, the harmony of the subjects, the density of the content, suitability for the level of the student, language expression, and style were asked in the study to the participants. The answers obtained from different questions are presented in Table 1 so that the evaluation of the participants about the textbooks can be deeply comprehended.

As seen in the first theme in Table 1, the number of teachers who stated that they encountered information inaccuracy in social studies textbooks was 18, and the number of teachers who stated that they did not is 11. Teachers who stated that they encountered inaccuracy mentioned that they encountered mostly visual, written, and statistical information inaccuracy. Some participants stated that they encountered inaccuracy in all of these themes. According to participant statements, the most common type of inaccuracy in textbooks is related to visual content. P2, one of the participants who emphasized the inaccuracy of visual information, exemplified the case in question by saying that *"While the Uyghur Alphabet was used in the first edition of the 6th Grade Social Studies Textbook, the visual alphabet given on the left belonged to the Hebrew Alphabet. However, this error was reverted in November 2019 upon the reactions."* P7, one of the participants, gives another example on the subject:

Whereas the technological developments are being processed in the 6th grade, the domestic production car is mentioned. The car picture is used to support what is described here. But this picture looks like a vehicle of an existing brand, not a domestic car.



P9, emphasizing the inaccuracy of written information, said:

...I have often come across wrong information in the books prepared by the Ministry of National Education... During the lesson, I remind the children of the truth of these mistakes. Sometimes there is a misconception, and sometimes a map that is not related to the subject is given.

11 of the participants stated that they did not encounter information inaccuracy in social studies textbooks. However, the statements by P20, after answering "no", draw attention:

...this year, I did not see any conspicuous misinformation. However, errors become clearer during the year. For instance, a big error was made last year. This error was noticed while the lessons were being taught when the academic season started. If there is an error this year, it will be revealed during the course.

The second theme in Table 1 is about the harmony of the themes in the textbooks with each other. Under this theme, whereas 12 teachers stated that there was "inconsistency" between the themes in the social studies textbooks, 13 teachers expressed that the themes were "consistent" with each other.

**Table 1.** Teacher Opinions on the Content of Social Studies Textbooks

Theme	Sub-theme	Participant	Frequency
Information Inaccuracy	Visual information inaccuracy	P1, P2, P5, P6, P7, P10, P14, P15, P20, P25	10
	Written information inaccuracy	P1, P9, P14, P22, P25	5
	Statistical information inaccuracy	P6, P14, P25	3
	Have not encountered	P3, P4, P11, P12, P13, P16, P17, P18, P21, P23, P24	11
Harmony of Themes	Inconsistency in 7th-grade themes	P4, P6, P11, P12, P15, P18, P20, P21, P23	9
	Inconsistency in 6th-grade themes	P4, P5, P6, P11, P15, P18, P20, P21	8
	Inconsistency in 5th-grade themes	P4, P6, P11, P15, P18, P20, P23	7
	Consistent themes	P1, P2, P3, P8, P9, P10, P12, P13, P14, P16, P17, P19, P24, P25	13
Density of Content	Density in 7th grade	P4, P6, P7, P10, P11, P15, P17, P18, P23, P24	10
	Density in 6th grade	P1, P8, P9, P11, P15, P18, P20	7
	Density in 5th grade	P11, P12, P14, P15, P18	6
	Convenient	P2, P3, P5, P13, P16, P19, P21, P22, P25	9
Suitability to Student Level	Above the 5th grade student level	P7, P12, P14, P15, P18, P19, P21, P22, P23, P25	10
	Above the 6th-grade student level	P1, P3, P8, P15, P18, P19, P22, P24, P25	9
	Above the 7th-grade student level	P4, P8, P15, P17, P18, P19, P22, P24	8
	Suitable for the student level	P2, P5, P6, P9, P10, P11, P13, P16, P20	9
Language, Expression, and Style	Abstract expression	P4, P10, P11, P15, P17, P20, P22	7
	Foreign vocabulary	P1, P5, P7, P19, P23	5
	Misspelling	P12, P19	2
	Free of problems	P2, P3, P6, P8, P9, P13, P14, P16, P18, P21, P24, P25	12

According to the statements of the participants, the inconsistency of the themes in the textbooks with each other is mostly encountered at the 7th-grade level. Nine participants stated that the themes in the 7th-grade social studies textbooks were inconsistent within themselves. P20, one of the participants who expressed their opinions on this subject, answered the related question as follows:

...there is no harmony between the themes. Social studies include many disciplines. However, the important thing is not to separate the themes. It should be integrated. Themes that are not created in this way are against the nature of social studies.

According to P14, who also stated that there was inconsistency even within the same theme at the 7th-grade level, *"We are studying the conquests of the Ottoman Empire. Meanwhile, we are going to Europe. This issue is over, and we pass to analyze the Ottoman Empire through the eyes of the travelers. Therefore, the integrity is broken."*

Mentioning the inconsistency in the order of the themes in the 6th-grade textbooks, P7 used the following sentences:

...I think that there is a lot of trouble in terms of harmony between the themes in the Social Studies 6th Grade Textbook because I think that information will be permanent when it is learned either deductively or inductively. In the first theme, while the unit of our values and we are being processed, it is nice. When I switch to the second theme, this beautiful order is broken. The first issue talks about our country. It continues like this until the sixth theme. Then, it passes to Europe. In the seventh theme, issues related to our country are discussed again. I think this order is not correct.

According to P15, who drew attention to the inconsistency of the themes in the social studies textbook at the 5th-grade level: *"... 5th-grade social studies textbooks were prepared randomly, and there was no harmony between the subjects, nor attention was paid to the chronology."* The expressions of P8, one of the teachers who stated that the themes in the social studies textbooks are *"consistent"* with each other are as follows:

...I think that the themes in social studies, which benefit from many branches of science, are consistent within themselves. Our course, which is open to change and development, renews itself. Our lesson can be considered as a ship trying to find its way in a vast sea. Our course, which is open to development, can renew itself in the future. Themes can be updated.

In addition, stating that there is a helical order in the harmony of the themes, P2 used the following expressions:

...there is a harmony in the themes in the textbooks. A theme given in the 5th grade is given by expanding it in the 6th grade. In the same grade, a theme is given, and then different aspects of that theme are mentioned. In other words, there is harmony and consistency between the themes.

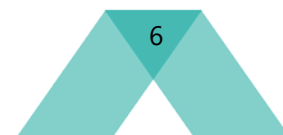
The third theme in Table 1 is the density of the content of social studies textbooks. In the related question, while 9 participants found the content convenient, 16 participants found the content in social studies textbooks *"extremely dense"*. In the related theme, the participants drew attention to the content density at the 7th-grade level at most. P20, one of these participants, draws attention to the dense content and expresses how this situation is reflected in the learning environment:

...the density of the content in the textbooks may vary according to the textbooks. For example, in the 5th grade, the content was given well. It can be given during class hours. When we examined the 7th-grade textbook, while the second unit Journey to Turkish History unit was taught about the Ottoman state, it tried to fit the very dense subject into three lesson hours. The subject remains abstract. If you are just starting to teach history, you should say how I could make my students love history. The topics are dense and straight narration. It does not attract attention. Pictures are nice but not enough for permanent learning. Not enough.

P7, who mentioned that the second theme in the 7th grade has a very dense content, used the following expressions:

...There are partial problems in the density of the content in the social studies textbooks. Although the second theme in 7th grade is very dense, it needs to be taught in 15 lesson hours. Ottoman history, European history, reforms, and the Ottomans from the eyes of travelers are concentrated in a book density on their own.

Stating that the content in the social studies textbook is extremely intense at the 6th-grade level, P20 explained this situation as follows:



5th graders are in good condition in terms of the density of the content. In the 6th grade, we teach almost a thousand years of history in the second unit. This situation both bores the children and reduces the efficiency of the lesson.

P14, who stated that the content is too dense at the 5th-grade level, explained this situation as follows: *"...I think the content in the textbooks is too dense. Three lecture hours is little to train these subjects. It is impossible to teach the first age civilizations in three lessons to children who have just started secondary school."*

Thinking that the problem of content density is not about the textbooks, but about the achievements, P22 approaches the related problem from another angle:

... I think the main problem in social studies is achievements. That is, what the achievements will be. In other words, are our real achievements who know the society, recognize the rules, love their nation, value their culture, and do not discriminate, or are our achievements the individuals who know the population of the country, count agricultural products, count the dates by heart, but are foreign to their culture? There are multiple attainments; the children are running like horses. While trying to teach a lot, many children are lost. In other words, the subjects and achievements of all courses are in a way that will appeal to students with an intelligence of 60-70 level. If students are below this level, they drop out of the course and cannot get efficiency.

P2, one of the 9 participants who think differently from the participants above, thinks that the content is not dense when compared to previous years: *"...the content in social studies textbooks was very dense before 2019, but it was diluted with the last change. Topics are presented in a few pages. This keeps the students active in the lesson."*

The fourth theme in Table 1 is about the suitability of the content in social studies textbooks to the level of students. In the related question, whereas nine of the participants found the content suitable for the student level, 16 of them stated that it was not suitable for the student level. Ten participants stated that the most problematic level in this regard is the 5th grade. P7, who expressed his opinion on this sub-theme, answered the question directed to him as follows:

...in social studies textbooks, there are problems regarding the suitability of the content with the level of the students. In the 5th grade 2 theme, the subject of I am learning civilizations is well above the level of the students. Again, the subject of institutions and organizations serving the public at the same grade level is above the level of the students because it is covered in detail. It contains overly abstract expressions. This situation bores the children in the lessons.

According to P22, one of the nine participants stated that the content in the social studies textbook is not suitable for the level of students at the 6th-grade level:

*"...Most of the information in the books is not at the student level. The information is given academically. The subjects in the 6th grade should be explained to the child not through the text, but by giving the picture and the text together."*

P19, who talked about the extreme abstractness of foreign words in the content of the 6th-grade textbooks, used the following expressions:

...in the books, many words are challenging for students and above level. For example, Tapates, fibula, the sun disc, ziggurat, maarif, capitulation, etc. Such kinds of words are used a lot. We also overwhelm our children with book information.

According to P4, who stated that the content in the social studies textbook is not suitable for the level of students in the 7th grade:

...there is no problem in general in the fifth and 6th-grade textbooks... The situation is a little different in the 7th-grade textbooks because the content remains too abstract. We give the subjects that should be covered in the first year of high school to the students in the 7th grade. This makes learning and retention difficult.

Similarly, P17, who criticized the content in the 7th-grade textbooks because it was above the mental abilities of the students, used the following statements:

...I did not encounter any problems in the 5th and 6th grades. The fact that the 7th-grade program covers a very wide area and the students have not fully entered the abstract operational stage at this age makes it difficult to learn. This situation causes students to have a negative attitude towards the lesson.

P8, who is among the participants, draws attention to the problem at different grade levels:

...there are rare subjects above student level in 5th grade. These can be taught through different methods and techniques. In the 6th and 7th grades, there is great difficulty in teaching and comprehending history subjects. History subjects in the 7th grade are so abstract and complex that they prevent the explanation and understanding of the Ottoman state. These topics, which are given in very small pieces, make learning difficult. Learning becomes difficult when students do not do the additional study that they have to do. History falls into an unpopular position.

According to P2, one of the teachers stated that the content in social studies textbooks is “suitable” in terms of suitability for the level of students:

...social studies textbooks are generally suitable for the level of children in terms of content. However, there may be problems with activities because the activities are created above the student level. Sometimes, the scope of the activities can be more than the subject.

Stating that the content in the textbooks is suitable for the level of the student, but there is a quality problem, P20 emphasized his thoughts as follows:

The content in the textbooks is suitable for the level of the student, but I think it is not of high quality. It should be more qualified and capable of attracting the student to the course. It will be more beneficial if it is prepared in an unmixed quality.

The fifth and last theme in Table 1 is about the language, expression, and style used in social studies textbooks. In this regard, 15 of the participants found the textbooks problematic. P20, one of the 7 participants who found the textbooks problematic due to “abstract expression”, answered the related question as follows:

...I don't think there are big problems in language expression and style, but I think a more attentive, more beautiful, and quality language can be used. When the subjects are very busy and cannot be explained well, children cannot get efficiency from the lesson. Reading pieces and information boxes can distribute the lesson because it is very busy. For example, when dealing with the subject of bridges between countries, too much abstract information is given. The student cannot remember them. While we are dealing with the subject of our commercial relations, I think the section named geographically marked product in the reading passage titled “Do you know these?” is very unnecessary. The subject goes off the axis while reading this section.

P1, one of the 6 participants who thought that social studies textbooks were problematic because of the “foreign vocabulary” they contained, explained his thoughts as follows:

...the language used in the textbooks is not too high above the level of the students. However, some words and concepts used are above the cognitive and readiness levels of children. For example, in the 5th grade, while the subject of the map was being taught, the concept of map index was used in the reading passage without any prior knowledge.

According to P5, who thinks that the related problem is not caused by the textbook, but by the students:

...the language used in the textbooks is suitable and at the student level. But because students do not have the habit of reading books, they sometimes state that they do not know the meaning of many words in the





book. When I asked "Have you ever heard this word to children?", they say they didn't hear. We use a dictionary to solve this issue.

P14, one of the 12 participants who stated that the content of the social studies textbooks is problem-free in terms of language, expression, and style, expressed his thoughts as follows: "...the language used in the textbooks is plain, fluent, and suitable for the level of children. Its style is clear and fluent. I like it.". Stating that the language, expression, and style in the textbooks are flawless and that there are some words that they do not know and that they find these words from the dictionary, P2 expressed his ideas with the following words:

...the language used in the social studies textbooks is fluent and understandable, and the style is also suitable for the subject. Sometimes, students who come across words that they do not know the meaning of, find these words in the dictionary. Thus, they both learn to use a dictionary, and the lesson is fun."

The question, "How would you evaluate the textbooks of the Ministry of National Education and private publishers in terms of content (accuracy of information, usability in daily life, harmony, density, suitability for student level, language and expression suitability for learning outcomes)?" was directed to the participants for social studies teachers to compare the textbooks prepared by the Ministry of National Education and private publishing houses. The obtained answers are provided in Table 2.

As can be observed in Table 2, whereas the participants generated 25 themes on the advantages of "MoNE Publishing House", they produced 29 themes on its disadvantages. Likewise, the "advantages" of the textbooks prepared by "private publishing houses" were emphasized in 19 of the participant answers, and the "disadvantages" in 13 of them. According to the participant teachers, the most frequently repeated theme about the advantages of the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is "accurate information". Seven participants stated that the information in the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is accurate. According to P7, one of the participants who expressed an opinion on this subject: "...when we compare the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House and private publishing houses, the books prepared by the MoNE Publishing House get positive grades because the information in the books of the MoNE Publishing House is accurate..." Likewise, P1 stated that the information in the book prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is accurate and has passed the necessary controls, and used the following statements: "...the information in the books prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is accurate because the control issues are kept very tight..."

According to the participants, the second most frequently repeated theme regarding the advantages of the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is "language expression". Four participants stated that the language and expression in the textbooks prepared by MoNE Publishing Houses are more appropriate. P10, one of the participants who expressed their opinions on this subject, answered the question posed to him as follows: "...when we compare the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House and private publishing houses, the books prepared by the MoNE Publishing House are well prepared in terms of language expression. There was no glaring negativity..." Moreover, stating that the narration used in the books prepared by MoNE Publishing House is appropriate despite being detailed, P1 used the following expressions: "...the examples and texts in the books prepared by MoNE Publishing House are facilitating learning. Even though the detailed language is used in historical matters, it is simple, clear, and understandable..."

One of the advantages of the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is that the content is attentive. According to P10, one of the 4 participants expressed an opinion in this direction: "...When we compare the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House and private publishing houses, it is seen that the content of the books prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is carefully prepared..." Again, mentioning the opinion that the used texts in the books prepared by the MoNE Publishing House

Expressing and the content were carefully prepared and checked by competent people, P20 used the following expressions: "...the content in the books prepared by MoNE Publishing House has been carefully prepared. The content is controlled by competent people..."

According to the participants, one of the advantages of the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is the print quality. Three participants expressed their opinion that the print of the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is of high quality and error-free. According to P7, one of the participants expressed their opinion in this direction: "...I think state books are very successful in printing and publishing. It is of very good quality. It is admirable that it has published such a large number of books and is of such high quality..."

**Table 2.** Opinions of Teachers on Comparing the Content of Social Studies Textbooks in the Context of Publishing Houses

<b>MoNE Publications</b>	<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
	Accurate information	P1, P3, P7, P10, P13, P16, P18	7
	Language expression	P10, P13, P15, P18	4
	Attentive content	P10, P13, P18, P20	4
	Relative to the student	P7, P13, P18	3
	Print quality	P12, P20, P23	3
	Values education	P1, P2	2
	Preparation to life	P4, P13	2
	<b>Total</b>		<b>25</b>
	<b>Disadvantages</b>		
	Insufficient assessment	P3, P9, P10, P12, P15, P17, P19, P20, P25	9
	Lack of content	P3, P7, P9, P11, P15, P17, P19, P21	8
	Information inaccuracy	P15, P17, P19, P21	4
	Visual deficiencies	P3, P15, P19	3
	Language expression problems	P19, P21	2
	Subjectivity	P19	1
	Not suitable for the level	P21	1
	Lack of effective achievements	P15	1
	<b>Total</b>		<b>29</b>
<b>Private Publishers</b>	<b>Advantages</b>		
	Exam preparation	P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P8, P14, P20, P24	9
	Permanent learning	P4, P6, P8, P22	4
	Presenting information	P1, P4, P14	3
	Density	P6, P7	2
	Short and summative	P2	1
	<b>Total</b>		<b>19</b>
	<b>Disadvantages</b>		
	Lack of values education	P1, P2, P7, P14, P21, P22	6
	Insufficient in exam	P17, P23	2
	Insufficient content	P11, P17	2
	Language expression problems	P20	1
	Not suitable for the level	P5	1
	Design based on economical income	P5	1
	<b>Total</b>		<b>13</b>

According to the teachers who participated in the interview, one of the advantageous aspects of the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is values education. Two participants stated that the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House are more advantageous than private publishing houses in terms of providing students with national and spiritual values. According to P2, one of the participants who expressed an opinion in this direction:

...state books are full of content. Special publications, on the other hand, explain the subject in short concise sentences and have questions solved. It does not make much of an effort to build character. State books, in contrast, are more successful in this regard. It strives to introduce concepts such as morality, virtue, honor, love of nation, etc. to students...

The most recurring theme in the answers emphasizing the disadvantages of social studies textbooks prepared by the Ministry of National Education is "assessment". Nine teachers stated that the assessment questions and activities in the textbooks prepared by the MoNE publishing houses were insufficient. According to P10, who stated that the evaluation section is insufficient and requires additional resources:

...since the number of tests in the assessment and evaluation sections of the books prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is low, it is necessary to purchase additional resource books upon the request of the parents. Sometimes parents can ask for suggestions in this direction...

According to the teachers, one of the disadvantages of the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is the lack of content. Eight participants stated that the content in the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is incomplete, insufficient, and not beneficial for the students. According to P7, one of the participants who answered the question that the content was too long and negatively affected the teacher:

...the textbooks prepared by our state and distributed to students free of charge are generally well prepared and receive positive reviews... However, they have problems with content. It keeps the content too long. It devotes a lot of space to unimportant matters. This situation creates a fear that the school will end before the teacher can finish the content...

P17 stated in the same direction that the content of the books prepared by the Ministry of National Education is insufficient and that it is not enough to be successful in the exams:

...I find the books prepared by the MoNE Publishing House insufficient because the content does not consist of the questions asked to the students in the exam. The information is explained very simply. When students take LGS, PYBS, etc. exams, they come across questions about subjects they have not studied. Either the content of the books should be enriched or the questions asked in the exams should be derived from the content of the textbooks...

According to the answers given by the teachers who participated in the interview, one of the disadvantages of the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is information inaccuracies. Four participants stated that the information in the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is not as it should be. According to P15, one of the participants expressed an opinion on this subject:

...the general evaluation of the books is sloppy and aims to make money for the affiliate publishing houses. The information has no scientific basis. There is a lot of inaccurate information... Books are prepared by making use of the information on the internet instead of making use of the archives...

Evaluating this situation from a different perspective and thinking that the content of the books prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is above the level of the students, P21 used the following statements:

...in terms of the accuracy of the information, the books prepared by MoNE Publishing House are not very suitable for the level of the students. The content can be made simpler to understand. Thus, students can understand the subject more easily..."

According to participant statements, another disadvantage of the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House is their visual deficiencies. Three participant teachers stated that the visual materials

in the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House were not sufficient. The answer of P19, who thinks in the interview that the visuals and diagrams are few, is as follows:

...the shortcomings of the books by MoNE Publishing House are as follows: There are plenty of visual diagrams, flowcharts, etc. By giving weight, the texts can be divided into parts and the paragraphs can be reduced. Texts can be scattered around images in short sentences...

According to the answers given by the teachers who participated in the interview, another subject that the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House are disadvantageous is *"language expression"*. Two participants stated that the language and expression in the textbooks prepared by the MoNE Publishing House are not appropriate. P21, one of the participants who expressed an opinion on this subject, answered the question as follows:

...I think that the books of the Ministry of Education Publishing House are not suitable for the level of the students... A language and expression that is suitable for the level of the students and free from foreign words should be used in the course books...

When the opinions of the social studies teachers in the research about the textbooks prepared by "private publishing houses" are examined, it is seen that 19 of the answers focus on *"advantages"* and 13 answers on *"disadvantages"*. Among the advantages of textbooks prepared by private publishing houses, the most frequently repeated theme is *"exam preparation"*. Nine participants stated that the textbooks prepared by private publishing houses are more successful in terms of preparation for the exam. One of the participants who expressed their opinions on this issue, P1 answered the related question as follows:

...There are a few questions and activities in the books by MoNE Publishing House... The books of private publishing houses are prepared for students to be successful in the exams. It gives the information directly. It does not branch out the subject. It explains it in a few sentences. Then, it goes to the question-solving.

In the same way, P7 stated that the books prepared by private publishing houses prepare the students for the exam by having them solve the subject-based questions, and expressed his thoughts as follows:

...There are very few activities in the books prepared by the MoNE Publishing House... The books of private publishing houses are sufficient in terms of the number of questions. Since there are question solutions after each topic, students study the topic and then solve their questions immediately. This allows the learned information to be used in the exam. I think MoNE Publishing House should try to prepare subject-based questions...

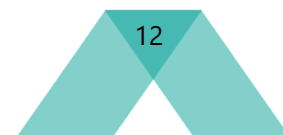
One of the advantages emphasized by the participants of the textbooks prepared by private publishing houses is that they provide *"permanent learning"*. According to P6, one of the four participants expressed an opinion in this direction:

...Private publishers, on the other hand, have good narration and explain the subjects well. It provides permanent learning for students. The books by special publishers are more suitable for the mentality of the children. It helps the subjects stay in the mind...

P8 supports this \*opinion through the statements such as *"...The handling and flow of the subject in the books of private publishers supports the permanence of the learning... Having side notes on the important part of the content increases the permanence of the learning..."*

According to the answers given by the teachers in the interviews, another advantage of the textbooks prepared by private publishing houses is related to the way of *"presenting information"*. P6, who expressed his opinion on this subject, answered the question as follows:

...private publishing houses present information about the subject and achievement with a few crucial sentences. In the first place, it states how to solve the questions that may arise on that subject. Students and their parents receive special publications because their biggest goal is to be successful in the exams...



Regarding the disadvantages of social studies textbooks prepared by private publishing houses, the most recurring theme is about *"values education"*. Six participant teachers stated that the textbooks prepared by private publishing houses are insufficient to provide students with national and spiritual values. According to P7, one of the participants who expressed an opinion on this subject:

...even though the books of private publishing houses are successful in many fields, they do not make much effort in values education. From the simplest point of view, even a picture describing helping each other is not shared. Everything is designed for exam success. Such books take the wrong path in terms of value acquisition...

According to P14, who thinks that private publishing houses do not care about values education:

...the perspective of private publishing houses toward our students is like a horse participating in a competition. It is as if the only goal is to find the right one out of four options...Such concepts as morality, virtue, honor, dignity, patriotism, decency, right, responsibility, etc. are pushed into the background...

According to the participant teachers, another disadvantage of the textbooks prepared by private publishing houses is the *"insufficient content"*. Two participants stated that the content of the textbooks prepared by private publishing houses is insufficient. P17, one of the participants who expressed an opinion in this direction, answered the question as follows:

The books by MoNE Publishing House are considered sufficient in terms of content. However, this is not the case when it comes to books prepared by private publishing houses. Private publishers should increase their content. Visual schema summaries should be increased...

Another disadvantage of the textbooks prepared by private publishing houses in line with the statements of the teachers participating in the interview is related to *"language expression problems"*. One participant teacher stated that the language and expression used in the textbooks prepared by private publishing houses are not appropriate. Participant P20, who expressed his opinion on this subject, answered the question as follows:

...the books of private publishing houses receive negative marks in all criteria in the question asked to me. There is no limit to the evil in special publications in language, expression, and spelling. There are excessive spelling errors in some of the special publications that we have received...

Based on the statements of the participating teachers, the fifth theme, which has the disadvantages of the textbooks prepared by private publishing houses, is *"suitability to the student level"*. One participant teacher stated that the content of the textbooks prepared by private publishing houses is not suitable for the student and their mentality. P5, who expressed an opinion in this direction, answered the question as follows:

...Textbooks prepared by private publishing houses generally do not take the level of students into account. It is assumed that the student will graduate from the class he/she is into to the fullest. This puts textbooks above the readiness of children. When the opportunities and environment of the students are not taken into account, piles of sentences that do not appeal to students emerge...

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

According to the findings obtained in the research, most of the participants emphasized that they observed information inaccuracies in the textbooks prepared under the 2018 Social Studies Program and used at different grade levels. This situation has come to the agenda of the national media from time to time (Milliyet, 2019). When the studies on the textbooks prepared in the previous years and prepared according to the 2005 Social Studies Program were examined, it was concluded that these textbooks did not receive negative criticism in terms of information and that the expressions in the content met the relevant criteria (Eğdemir, 2017; Ertürk & Güler, 2017; Esen, 2017; Mentiş-Taş, 2007;

Tonga, 2007; Turan, 2015). This situation can be interpreted as a decrease in the care in writing social studies textbooks or the effectiveness of control mechanisms.

About half of the teachers participating in the research stated that the themes in the social studies textbooks are not compatible with or complement each other. In fact, according to some participants, there are problems with the subject transitions within the same theme. In studies conducted before 2018, social studies teachers expressed some criticisms about the content of textbooks and the way the content was organized (Çetin, 2016; Çimen-Kurt, 2017; Esen, 2017). This situation indicates a chronic problem related to the content envisaged by the social studies program in Turkey. As it is known, the National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS] (1993), one of the leading institutions in terms of social studies teaching in the world, defines social studies as a study in which social and human sciences are integrated, in other words, intertwined to develop citizenship competencies. However, when both 2005 and 2018 programs in Turkey are examined, it is understood that units or themes are still based on history, geography, and citizenship. As stated by the participants, this situation continues to create problems in terms of social studies teaching.

Another result revealed by the research findings is related to the density of the content of social studies textbooks. Most of the participants rated the textbook contents at different grade levels as "extremely dense". In studies conducted before 2018, it is seen that social studies teachers criticize textbooks because they include unnecessary details (Çetin, 2016; Çimen-Kurt, 2017; Esen, 2017). This situation is important in that it shows that another chronic problem of social studies teaching in Turkey cannot be solved with the 2018 program and the textbooks prepared after. However, with the 2018 Social Studies Program, the total number of achievements was reduced from 175 to 98. However, despite the wide scope of the relevant acquisitions and the radical change experienced in 2005, the fact that the social studies teaching in Turkey still prioritizes knowledge over skills causes the content problem in textbooks to continue.

Most of the social studies teachers who participated in the research stated that the textbooks were not suitable for the level of the students. The study by Deniz (2019) also supports this result. Participants especially stated that the 5th-grade textbooks are not suitable for the level of students. This situation reveals the necessity of re-evaluating social studies textbooks from a pedagogical perspective. When the participants evaluated the textbooks in terms of language and expression, they drew attention to some abstract expressions and the use of foreign words. Therefore, it can be said that the problem of compliance with the level in the textbooks is also related to the language and expression used in the content.

When asked to compare the social studies textbooks prepared by the Ministry of National Education or private publishing houses in terms of advantages and disadvantages, no significant difference was observed in the answers of the participants. Even though there is a serious labor and cost difference, according to the participants, the disadvantages of the textbooks prepared by the Ministry of National Education are much higher than those of private publishing houses. This situation emerges as an issue that should be considered by those who manage the textbook preparation processes. While the participants find the evaluation parts of the textbooks prepared by the Ministry of National Education inadequate, they see private publishing houses as advantageous in this respect. Therefore, textbooks prepared by private publishing houses are found to be more successful in preparing students for the exam. However, the fact that an exam-oriented approach is at the forefront for private publishing houses has caused values education to be pushed to a successor position.

In conclusion, it can be said that the textbooks prepared after 2018 still cannot solve the important chronic problems of social studies teaching. This brings to mind the question of how well the textbook writing and supervision processes in Turkey are progressing. The results of this research reveal once again the importance of carrying out the relevant processes by experts in the field to overcome these



problems. However, as Gözütok (2017) stated, the 2018 program entered into force without a pilot implementation. This has led to the fact that the deficiencies and errors related to the program can only be detected after it is implemented at the national level. However, careful implementation of pilot applications in both the program and the preparation of the textbook will contribute to the elimination of many possible deficiencies in social studies textbooks.

### Statement of Researchers

#### **Statement on contribution rate by researchers:**

In this research, which was produced from the master's thesis of the first author, the first author created the literature, applied the measurement tools, prepared the findings, and formed the conclusion part. The second author rearranged the literature, determined the research model, and rearranged the findings and conclusion. The measurement tools used in the research were created with the joint contribution of both authors. The first author's contribution rate is 55% and the second author's contribution rate is 45% to the study.

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