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Skill hierarchies of teacher candidates: an analysis in the context of skills included in the social studies curriculum in Turkey*

Murat Bayram Yılar[1]

Abstract

This study aimed to examine the opinions of Social Studies (SS) teacher candidates on the skills in the 2018 Social Studies Curriculum (SSC) and reveal their skill hierarchies with justifications. For this purpose, we used the basic qualitative research design widely used in education. The participant group of the research consists of SS teacher candidates. We used criterion sampling, a purposeful sampling method, to determine the participant group. The 57 SS teacher candidates participated in the study. The data were collected through online interviews and written answers through an interview form consisting of open-ended questions. The content analysis approach was used in the analysis of the data. The results revealed that the skills considered most significant by the majority of the teacher candidates were communication, empathy, innovative thinking, critical thinking, and problem-solving. In contrast, the least significant ones were financial literacy, media literacy, legal literacy, perception of space, and digital literacy. Finally, it was determined that the participants mostly wished they added to the curriculum were leadership, creative thinking, interpretation, adaptation, intercultural communication and participation, self-confidence, and time management. This result also shows a difference of opinion about creative thinking skills.

Keywords:

Skill, Skill training, Skill hierarchy, Teacher candidates, Social studies curriculum

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[1]Ondokuz Mayıs University, Education Faculty, Turkish and Social Sciences Education Department, Turkey. bayram.yilar@omu.edu.tr

INTRODUCTION

The dizzying developments in science and technology since the end of the 20th century have made the concept of "skill" more prominent, especially in education. Because raising successful individuals who can keep up with these developments and create a healthy society requires acquiring some basic skills from an early age. Skill, which means mastery and proficiency as a word, is the ability to accomplish a job and conclude an action appropriately, depending on a person's disposition and learning (Turkish Language Association [TLA], 2021). Skill is the predisposition required to do a job or discuss a subject, which is designed to be acquired, developed, and transferred to life in students' learning process (Ata, 2009). In other words, skill is the ability to successfully organize the information students have structured in their minds, transferring them to their daily lives and showing them as a behavior (Yılar & Tomal, 2018).

Today, globalization makes itself felt strongly, especially in economic, political, and information-communication technologies and affects almost everything by making the world smaller. The fact that the pressure of globalization has begun to be felt well and the changing and developing living conditions in the 21st century have brought up the question of how a new human profile can keep up with such developments should be. In this regard, the reports published by many institutions and organizations, such as the World Economic Forum [WEF] (2016), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD] (2005, 2018), World Health Organization [WHO], (2020), European Union [EU] (2006) and British Council [BC] (2016) show that the answer to this question focuses on various skills.

The skills recommended in the reports vary, but many are generally accepted common skills. In this regard, it should be noted that the project named "Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21)" (P21 Leadership States, 2009), which is applied in many states of the United States and various countries around the world, is very popular with the 21st-century skills it has proposed. In the project in question, the skills and competencies that 21st-century people should have briefly grouped into three groups. These are Learning and Innovation Skills, Information, Media, Technology Skills, and Life and Career Skills.

Given these skills, it is evident that they are associated with deeper learning, predominantly based on analytical reasoning, complex problem-solving, and teamwork. Today's interconnectedness due to global economic and political networks requires young people to learn to communicate, collaborate, and solve problems with people worldwide. According to Frey and Osborne (2013), it is estimated that almost half of today's professions will disappear soon. The science and business world primarily need competent people in robotics, cyber-security, neuroscience, artificial intelligence, and network technologies.

In short, the way of thinking of 21st-century people should be creative, innovative, critical, communicative, and cooperative, and working tools should include information and communication technologies. Furthermore, 21st-century people should care about life and career and become local and global citizens who fulfill their personal and social responsibilities (Binkley, Erstad, Herman, Raizen, Ripley, Miller-Ricci & Rumble, 2012). All this shows that the mission of schools to only transfer information to students is over. Now, the task of schools is to equip new generations with the knowledge, skills, and values required by the 21st century to compete in the international arena. Thus, many countries, especially Western countries, question their education systems and try to take new measures not to be indifferent to these developments, follow scientific developments and keep up with the modern age (Yılar, 2020). The increasing complexity of life, the increase in the number of educated people, and the growing need for individuals with different skills in newly developing areas (Çelikkaya, Yıldırım & Kürümlüoğlu, 2019; Mutluer, 2013) necessitate the restructuring of education systems in the light of skills (Jacobson, 1998). The first step to preparing individuals for life by acquiring these skills is

through education programs. Accordingly, skills are included more comprehensively by making radical changes in the curricula in developed countries in the 1990s while in Turkey since the early 2000s. The reflections of this can be seen in the Social Studies Curriculum (SSC), which aims to raise active and effective citizens.

An analysis of the SSC from the past to the present reveals that skills have been accepted as one of the program's basic dimensions for the first time, especially in the 2005 program. However, skills had been included to a certain extent. Accordingly, the 2005 SSC included fifteen skills comprising nine basic skills (critical thinking, creative thinking, communication, research, problem-solving, decision-making, using information technologies, entrepreneurship, using Turkish correctly, beautifully, and effectively) and six field skills (observation, perception of space, perception of time and chronology, perception of change and continuity, social participation and empathy). Later, due to the increasing importance of skills worldwide, this number was increased to 27 in SSC 2018 (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2005, 2018). These values are given in Table 1:

Table 1. Skills Included in SSC 2005 and 2018

Skills included in SSC 2005	**Skills included in SSC 2018**	
1. Critical thinking*	1. Critical thinking *	16. Financial literacy***
2. Communication*	2. Communication*	17. Map literacy***
3. Research*	3. Research*	18. Legal literacy***
4. Problem-solving*	4. Problem-solving*	19. Recognizing stereotypes and prejudices***
5. Decision-making*	5. Decision-making*	20. Using evidence***
6. Entrepreneurship*	6. Entrepreneurship*	21. Location analysis***
7. Using Turkish correctly, beautifully, and effectively*	7. Using Turkish correctly, beautifully, and effectively*	22. Media literacy***
8. Observation*	8. Observation*	23. Self-control***
9. Perception of space*	9. Perception of space*	24. Political literacy***
10. Perception of time and chronology*	10. Perception of time and chronology*	25. Drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, and diagrams***
11. Perception of change and continuity*	11. Perception of change and continuity*	26. Innovative thinking***
12. Social participation*	12. Social participation*	27. Cooperation***
13. Empathy*	13. Empathy*	
14. Creative thinking**	14.Environmental literacy***	
15. Using information technologies**	15. Digital literacy***	

* Common skills included in both 2005 and 2018 curriculums
** Skills included in the 2005 curriculum only
*** Skills included in the 2018 curriculum for the first time

As seen in Table 1, thirteen of the fifteen skills in the 2005 curriculum were included in the new curriculum updated in 2018. Still, two were not included: Creative thinking and using information technologies. Additionally, fourteen new skills not included in the previous curriculums were added to the updated one, aiming to teach students twenty-seven skills. It is a positive development that these newly added skills were selected from among the skills that came to the fore in current education systems, especially in recent years. Nevertheless, it should be noted here that the teacher factor, who knows the skills in the curriculum and has the competence to teach them, is as essential as a curriculum that cares about skills. It seems crucial that teachers acquire specific competencies related to skills in the undergraduate education process before taking office.

It is a big question as to what extent the teachers currently on duty in Turkey possess this qualification and how many teacher candidates acquire these competencies in education faculties. However, some

studies in the literature with teachers (Gelen, 2002; Öztürk & Mutlu, 2017) and candidate teachers (Çelik, 2014) gave crucial clues about this. Moreover, some studies examining the status of primary, secondary, and high school students in terms of the acquisition of various skills included in the curriculums showed that students possess multiple skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and creative thinking at low levels (Gelen, 2011; Gökkurt & Soylu, 2013). Furthermore, Turkey's low ranking in examinations such as PISA, TIMSS, and PIRLS, which measure mainly skills such as problem-solving, commenting, and reading comprehension, hints there is a lack of skills training and that these skills are not gained enough at school. Indeed, the findings of Aydın, Sarıer, and Uysal (2014) and Güler (2013) supported this judgment in the context of PISA results. These studies reported that Turkish students had significant deficiencies in reading comprehension, problem-solving, creative and critical thinking, communication, questioning, and reasoning. Therefore, this revealed that teacher qualification and teacher training should be taken seriously in skill training.

This study focused on the skills of SSC 2018 and Social Studies (SS) teacher candidates who will teach these skills soon. An SS teaching undergraduate program analysis showed that no course was directly related to skills and skill teaching. Furthermore, in the 2006 SS teaching undergraduate program, information about skills was given in the Special Teaching Methods 1-2 courses. As per the definitions of the SS teaching undergraduate program courses updated in 2018, it is expected to teach about the 27 skills in the primary education program, especially in the Social Studies Education Programs and Social Studies Teaching-2 courses. Furthermore, candidate teachers can gain knowledge and experience about these skills in the Social Studies Learning and Teaching Approaches and Social Studies Teaching-1 courses included in the 2018 undergraduate program (Higher Education Council [HEC], 2007, 2018).

An analysis of the national literature on skills in the field of SS education showed that there are studies examining; the acquisitions in the curriculum in terms of standard and lesson-specific skills (Aydemir & Adamaz, 2017) and mental skills (Bulut & Taşkıran, 2014), SS textbooks and workbooks in terms of skills (Aydemir, 2017, Hayırsever & Kısakürek, 2014), the level of acquisition of skills in the curriculum in line with teachers' opinions (Çelikkaya, 2011; Gelen, 2002, 2011; Mutluer, 2013; Öztürk & Mutlu, 2017; Öztürk & Öğreten, 2017; Sahin, 2010); and the skills in the curriculum in line with student opinions (Gelen, 2011). Furthermore, there are studies analyzing the influence of the SS course on SS teacher candidates in terms of teaching reflective thinking skills (Aydın & Çelik, 2013) and basic skills (Kan, 2006). When the relevant international literature is examined, it is seen that skills are handled from different perspectives in SS courses. For example, Fischer, Bol, and Pribesh (2011) stated to what extent high-level thinking skills are supported in SS courses; on the other hand, Al-Rabaani (2014) examined the social studies teacher candidates' acquisition of scientific process skills. Brugar and Whitlock (2018) the relationship between SS teaching approaches and "Basic Social Studies Skills and Strategies" published by NCSS; also, Al-Qahtani (1995) examined how effectively thinking skills were taught in secondary school SS courses. VanSickle and Hoge (1991) tried to explain in the context of SS education how important it was to acquire higher cognitive thinking skills for future young citizens to discuss citizenship problems. Karnes, Collins, Maheady, Harper, and Mallette (1997) presented practical examples of how collaborative learning strategies could improve students' thinking, communication, information sharing, and literacy skills in SS lessons. Farisi (2016) evaluated the "21st Century Skills Map for Social Studies" created with the partnership of NCSS and Partnership-21 advocates regarding teacher competencies and teacher undergraduate education programs. Paquette and Kaufman (2008) developed activities to combine the program's citizenship subjects with literacy skills for students to grasp the critical SS content better. On the other hand, Evans and Clark (2015) explained how secondary school SS teachers could integrate literacy skills into their lessons and presented sample teaching strategy activities that could help them in this regard.

Apart from these, there is only one study investigating the skill hierarchies of teachers or students in the field of SS education. This study by Çelikkaya et al. (2019) examined the rankings of SS teachers and 8th-grade students regarding the skills in the curriculum. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that there is no other

study addressing the opinions of SS teacher candidates on skills and skill hierarchies, especially considering the 2018 SSC. Furthermore, the limited research on skills in SSC 2018, in general, shows that this study can contribute to the field in general.

Teachers must gain the necessary competencies during the undergraduate education process to provide successful skills training. Therefore, it is essential to reveal; whether the candidates who receive teacher education have information about the curriculum and the skills in the program, and their skill awareness and hierarchy. Thus, by looking at candidate teachers' opinions, one can have the opportunity to understand and interpret the teacher training process in skill teaching. Accordingly, this study aimed to reveal the SS teacher candidates' opinions and hierarchies regarding the skills in the 2018 curriculum. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What five skills do SS teacher candidates consider the most significant in SSC 2018?
2. What five skills do SS teacher candidates consider the least significant among SSC 2018?
3. What skills did the SS teacher candidates deem missing or suggested in SSC 2018?

METHOD

Research Design

Basic qualitative research, one of the qualitative research designs frequently preferred in education, was used. Basic qualitative research is a qualitative research design aiming to understand a phenomenon, process, or specific point of view from the relevant people's perspective and provides rich descriptive explanations (Ary, Jacobs, Irvine & Walker, 2013). In this design, the participants' questions are prepared per the theoretical framework discipline of the study, and data collection tools such as document analysis, observations, or interviews can be used (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Accordingly, it was considered appropriate to use this design to reveal the teacher candidates' opinions about the skills in the SSC and present them with descriptive explanations.

Participant Group

The participant group consisted of social studies teacher candidates studying at the education faculty of a state university in the Black Sea Region in Turkey in the spring semester of the 2019-2020 academic year. We used the criterion sampling strategy, one of the purposeful sampling methods, to determine the participants. Purposeful sampling focuses on rich information situations that will shed light on the questions (Patton, 2014). Criterion sampling refers to studying and reviewing conditions that have a set of criteria determined before the research (Patton, 2014; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Accordingly, it was aimed to reach participants who met specific criteria and could provide rich information about the problem under investigation. The study's criterion was "having taken and passed the course of Social Studies Education Program. Thus, the participants had knowledge, experience, and opinions about the skills in the social studies curriculum. After the people who met the research criterion were determined, fifty-seven social studies teacher candidates willing and volunteering to participate formed the participant group. Seventeen of the participants were men, and forty were women. The range of the participants varies between 17 and 23. All participants are unmarried. Since all teacher candidates participating in the research were qualified as "participants," code names and coding systems such as P1 and P8 were used in direct quotations.

Data Collection

The research collected data through online one-on-one interviews and by filling out a written form. For this, an interview form developed by the researcher and consisting of open-ended questions was used. In creating the form, the studies in the relevant literature dealing with the skills in social studies curricula with different research methods were analyzed, and data collection tools were considered. After the literature review, we finalized eight questions planned to be included in the open-ended interview, and

a draft open-ended interview form was prepared. Additionally, the form was first applied to three candidate teachers to determine whether the participants quickly understood the form and whether the questions were appropriately arranged in terms of language and expression. As the feedback received and the final interviews with social studies educators who are experts in the field of qualitative research, the clarity and consistency of the interview questions and their responsiveness to the research questions were confirmed. After all these stages, the interview form, consisting of five open-ended questions, was finalized.

Before collecting the research data, we met the candidate teachers who met the criterion through Google Classroom and gave information about the study's general purpose and the questions in the interview form. Moreover, they were informed that the identity details of those participating in the study voluntarily would not be disclosed, and they would be given nicknames. As such, ethical principles were considered, reducing the participants' possible concerns and anxieties about conveying their opinions and ensuring that they were informed about the research's general structure and voluntarily participated in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In line with the purpose of the study, data were collected in two different ways. Accordingly, some data were obtained from individual online interviews with ten teacher candidates (6 women, four men) over Google Classroom. The interviews were conducted by the researcher and recorded with the participants' permission. The records obtained were transcribed and written. The other part of the data was obtained from the written opinions of 47 pre-service teachers (34 female, 13 male) who filled out the form sent to them via e-mail.

Data Analysis

The content analysis approach was used to analyze the data of this study. The content analysis aims to reduce qualitative data to determine qualitative material's essential consistency and meanings (Patton, 2014). According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016), the content analysis consists of the phases of (i) encoding data, (ii) finding themes, (iii) organizing codes and themes, and (iv) defining and interpreting the findings. This study used such approach suggested by Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016). In the first two stages, the researcher and a social studies specialist independently made their first coding and determined their possible themes. The Miles and Huberman (1994) formula calculated their reliability between the two analyses, and the reliability coefficient was determined as 88.344. Then, in the third stage, ideas were exchanged on the code and possible themes, and the final themes were decided. In the last stage, the findings' definition and interpretation were presented to the reader under four main themes.

Ethical Considerations

This research was carried out with the approval of Ondokuz Mayıs University, Ethics Committee for Researches on Social Sciences and Humanities, with the decision numbered "2020/809" in the session dated 25.12.2020.

FINDINGS

This section includes the findings after analyzing the data obtained from the teacher candidates' opinions about the skills in SSC, which were categorized under four main themes. These themes are the five skills considered the most significant in SSC, the five least significant ones, skills not included in SSC, and skills missing or expected to be included in SSC.

Five Skills Considered Most Significant in SSC 2018

According to the study's findings, the skills teacher candidates considered most significant in the SSC were digitized depending on their order of importance and presented in Table 1.

Table 1 showed that the top five skills that the participants attached great importance to in SSC were communication, empathy, innovative thinking, critical thinking, problem solving, and using Turkish correctly, beautifully, and effectively. These skills were followed by research, self-control, social participation, collaboration, entrepreneurship, observation, and decision-making. Moreover, some

participants considered environmental literacy, perception of change and continuity, legal literacy, recognizing stereotypes and prejudices, digital literacy, map literacy, using evidence, political literacy, financial literacy, and location analysis skills significant. However, it stands out that among the twenty-seven skills, media literacy, perception of space, and the ability to draw and interpret tables and graphs, any participant among the five most essential skills did not list diagrams.

Table 1. Top 5 Skills Considered Most Significant in the SSC 2018

Skills	Order of Significance					Total Repetition
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	
Communication	16	13	4	2	7	**42**
Empathy	5	11	6	4	1	**27**
Innovative thinking	3	2	3	11	6	**25**
Critical thinking	6	4	6	3	2	**21**
Problem-solving	3	3	4	5	4	**19**
Using Turkish correctly, beautifully, and effectively	8	3	3	1	4	**19**
Research	6	3	4	1	3	**17**
Self-control	4	2	3	2	4	**15**
Social participation	0	2	3	5	4	**14**
Collaboration	0	1	3	3	5	**12**
Entrepreneurship	1	1	1	5	3	**11**
Observation	0	4	0	2	3	**9**
Decision-making	1	2	2	1	3	**9**
Environmental literacy	1	0	3	2	2	**8**
Perception of change and continuity	1	0	3	2	1	**7**
Perception of time and chronology	0	1	1	2	2	**6**
Legal literacy	2	2	1	0	0	**5**
Recognizing stereotypes and prejudices	0	1	2	1	1	**5**
Digital literacy	0	0	2	0	2	**4**
Map literacy	0	0	0	4	0	**4**
Using evidence	0	1	1	0	0	**2**
Political literacy	0	1	0	1	0	**2**
Financial literacy	0	0	1	0	0	**1**
Location analysis	0	0	1	0	0	**1**
Media literacy	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Perception of space	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, and diagrams	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Total	**57**	**57**	**57**	**57**	**57**	**285**

The communication skill stood out among SSC's top five most significant skills. The participants considered that students with high communication skills would become individuals who expressed themselves well, were influential in human relations, produced and conveyed information, and could easily access and interpret data. Additionally, they stated that communication skill was crucial for good, effective, productive, and democratic citizens bound to the aims of the social studies course. Moreover, they also expressed that individuals with communication skills would be self-confident, more empathetic, and respectful and who got along better with other people. Some of the statements supporting these findings were as follows:

> P23: The better we teach students about … communication skills and give them this skill, the better we will raise a self-confident generation that can express themselves and their ideas better. Such students can express their thoughts freely, and we will have brought active individuals to society. …

> P14: … Good communication skills lie behind human success as a social being… Especially when the social studies lesson is considered in the context of general and special purposes, I think that raising good, effective, productive, and democratic citizens requires strong communication skills.

Empathy was the second skill considered most significant among the top five skills. The participants stated that empathy was crucial for students to look at an event and a phenomenon from different perspectives, understand others' thoughts, respect differences and be sensitive to their environment. P17's following statements supported this point: "Skills included in the curriculum such as looking from different perspectives, being open-minded, understanding others' feelings and thoughts and respecting differences are related to empathy. Therefore, the social studies lesson is one of the most appropriate lessons for gaining, using, and developing empathy skills." Similarly, K32 said the following about empathy skills: "Children with empathy skills can grow up as individuals who are sensitive to their environment, understand the thoughts and feelings of people in the past and communicate well. Therefore, it is one of the vital skills that children should be taught at an early age." Thus, the participant emphasized that one of the indispensable aims of the social studies program is to bring empathy to the child at an early age.

The third most significant skill in SSC for the participants was innovative thinking. In their statements about the importance of the innovative thinking skill, the participants generally pointed out that they considered this skill essential to adapt to global and social change and produce scientific and technological innovations which would play a role in the future of the country by developing new ideas, improve existing knowledge and move away from false beliefs. Some of the sentences of the participants stating the significance of the innovative thinking skill were as follows:

> P30: Innovative thinking is an essential skill for the future of our society. This skill refers to using imagination to produce contemporary ideas with the help of emerging technologies. This skill is critical in raising active, influential, and qualified individuals who can use solution-oriented knowledge, skills, and competencies in the face of social problems, produce ideas and use their thinking skills.
>
> P17: … Considering the pace of change in today's information age, we need more innovative and creative power every day… Gaining this skill ensures that the student is both a creative individual and takes an active role in social life.

The fourth skill considered most significant in the top five was critical thinking. The participants stated that necessary thinking skills encouraged students to reason about a topic and contributed to analyzing and evaluating the issue or event from different perspectives. Furthermore, they pointed out that this skill was important for students to question the stereotypes used in their social environment and realize that not every piece of information is correct. P13's statement, "Critical thinking encourages students to reason, analyze and evaluate. It is important to test stereotypes and whether every piece of information is correct." supported these findings. In parallel, the following views of P16 regarding the importance of the critical thinking skill are remarkable:

> Critical thinking is the most important skill that directly and indirectly affects the acquisition of all the other skills, as it will direct the person to correct mistakes and logically find deficiencies in different subjects. For example, finding solutions to social problems first requires a critical evaluation. …

Some participants stated that critical thinking was essential to raise more influential and responsible individuals who can think differently and independently from existing authorities, inquire about the causes of events, and contribute to democratic life. P32 expressed their feeling saying, "I think individuals who can think differently and independently from the current authorities should be raised. Students generally think about a certain pattern and arrive at similar conclusions. I argue that critical thinking should be a basic skill." P56, on the other hand, expressed the importance of critical thinking for the democratic life culture stating, "The aim of gaining the critical thinking skill is to protect and develop the democratic life culture. Ensuring that students gain critical thinking will be effective in raising them as influential and responsible citizens…." SSC skills ranked fifth in importance for the participants were problem-solving and using Turkish correctly, beautifully, and effectively. The participants expressed their opinion about the problem-solving skill, stating that the students needed to solve the problems they might encounter in their personal, family, or professional life, cope with them, and have a solution-oriented lifestyle. Participants expressed their opinions on this subject with the following sentences:

> P1: … We will encounter a problem that needs to be solved at every step. Therefore, their progress will be easier when we bring students' problem-solving skills and integrate them into their lives. … Thus, problem-solving skill in SSC is vital for me.
>
> P16: … Solving problems practically and successfully per national and universal values and legal rules is part of being a good citizen. This skill is obligatory for every Turkish citizen because of our country's mathematical position, the enemies she has gained through victories throughout history, and the fact that it is a country that has to struggle to develop and become stronger despite everything.

The other fifth skill the participants attached the most importance to among the top five was using Turkish correctly, beautifully, and effectively. The participants believed that this skill would develop students' sense of national consciousness and unity, contribute to becoming individuals bound to the Turkish language, culture, and civilization, and was necessary for raising individuals who could express their thoughts well and communicate effectively. P13 expressed their view saying, "The social studies course provides students with the sense of national consciousness and unity that is expected to be gained, first of all, through the language that is the common element of a nation. Language is our vocabulary and common mind that carries the accumulation of thousands of years of culture and civilization at its core. Therefore, attention should be paid to speaking Turkish correctly, beautifully, and effectively."

Five Skills Considered Least Significant in SSC 2018

According to the findings, the skills teacher candidates considered least significant in the SSC were digitized depending on their order of most minor importance and presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Top Five Skills Considered Least Significant in the SSC 2018

	Order of Significance					Total Repetition
Skills	**1.**	**2.**	**3.**	**4.**	**5.**	
Financial literacy	10	6	5	6	1	28
Media literacy	2	2	6	2	9	21
Legal literacy	3	8	2	2	5	20
Perception of space	3	7	4	1	3	18
Digital literacy	2	3	5	4	3	17
Recognizing stereotypes and prejudices	4	4	2	3	3	16
Location analysis	4	3	3	5	1	16
Political literacy	3	6	4	1	1	15
Using evidence	2	3	2	6	1	14
Drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, and diagrams	5	1	2	3	1	12
Map literacy	6	2	1	0	2	11
Decision-making	1	0	2	5	2	10
Using Turkish correctly, beautifully, and effectively	0	3	3	0	4	10
Perception of change and continuity	2	0	3	1	3	9
Entrepreneurship	0	2	4	1	2	9
Perception of time and chronology	5	2	0	1	1	9
Empathy	1	2	0	3	2	8
Environmental literacy	1	0	1	3	2	7
Collaboration	0	1	1	3	2	7
Social participation	1	0	1	2	3	7
Observation	0	0	2	1	3	6
Research	0	1	2	0	1	4
Self-control	0	0	0	2	2	4
Innovative thinking	2	0	0	1	0	3
Critical thinking	0	1	0	1	0	2
Problem-solving	0	0	2	0	0	2
Communication	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**57**	**57**	**57**	**57**	**57**	**285**

Table 2 displayed that the top five skills that the participants considered least significant in SSC were financial literacy, media literacy, legal literacy, perception of space, and digital literacy, respectively. These skills were followed by recognizing stereotypes and prejudices, location analysis, political literacy, using evidence, and drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, and diagrams. Furthermore, some of the participants stated that they considered map literacy, decision-making, using Turkish correctly, beautifully, and effectively, perception of change and continuity, entrepreneurship, perception of time and chronology, empathy, environmental literacy, collaboration, social participation, observation, research, self-control, innovative thinking, critical thinking and problem-solving as the least significant. The participants did not include communication in their opinions on the top five most minor considerable skills in the 2018 SSC. They gave little place to problem-solving, critical thinking, innovative thinking, self-control, and research.

Financial literacy was the first skill that the participants considered least significant in SSC. The participants regarded financial literacy skill as the least important as they believed that the subjects in the context of financial literacy skills, such as budgeting, planning, conscious consumption, saving, and investing, were not appropriate for students' development and readiness levels. Moreover, most participants stated that they regarded financial issues as less important than the other subjects in the social studies course. Additionally, the participants believed that the subjects within the scope of entrepreneurship and self-control skills, savings value, and financial literacy skills could be taught to students. Therefore, they stated that they saw financial literacy skills as the least important. Some of the participants' views supporting these findings were as follows;

> P32: Financial literacy can also be considered a necessary skill when considering living conditions because the financial situation can touch every aspect of our lives. However, I do not think giving it to children at this age is appropriate. I found it ambitious to teach this as a skill in primary and secondary schools. I think it should be given in high school education at the earliest.
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> P44: Some skills and values are alternatives to this skill. These are self-control, savings, and entrepreneurship. I think these skills and values are sufficient to teach the components of financial literacy skills. That is why financial literacy skill is unimportant to me.

The second skill that the participants considered least significant among the skills in SSC was media literacy. Twenty-one participants stated that the media literacy skill was one of the least important. Twenty of them pointed out that this skill should be under digital literacy. This is an exciting finding for media literacy skills. On the other hand, the other participant stated that the skill was not suitable for the student's age level. Some of the statements supporting the findings were as follows:

> P45: Media literacy is less important because it has an alternative: Digital literacy. Digital literacy is a more general concept and includes media literacy.
>
> P57: The media literacy skill given within the scope of the social studies course is not that suitable for the age group in question. The media is a mixed platform; even adults are unaware of it. I do not think media literacy is relevant to the social studies course.

The third skill considered least important was legal literacy. Most participants believed the concepts discussed within its scope were unsuitable for the student's age level because of their abstract structure. One participant, P40, said, "I do not think that the students are big enough to adopt the concepts of this skill and gain it," supporting these findings. In addition to these views, some stated that legal literacy skills should be given in law and justice and human rights, citizenship, and democracy courses. Another interesting finding was that two participants thought the legal literacy skill should be considered within digital literacy, and one was under political literacy. Another interesting finding was that two participants thought that the legal literacy skill should be regarded as within digital literacy, and one of the participants was under political literacy.

The fourth skill considered least significant was the perception of space. The participants considered this skill the least important mainly because they thought there were alternatives to this skill in SSC: environmental literacy, observation, location analysis, and map literacy skills. Regarding this finding, P6 said, "The reason I consider this skill the least important is that location analysis and perception of space skills are almost the same." In contrast, P21 said, "I think that the perception of space skill has alternatives among other skills. These are location analysis, environmental literacy, and map analysis skills." The fifth skill participants considered the least important was digital literacy. The participants believed that media literacy skill could provide the skills that fall under the scope of digital literacy; it was not appropriate to give this skill in the field of the social studies course, and that the children born into the digital age could easily acquire the abilities required by this skill in out-of-school environments. The following statements of P32 can be given as an example: "Digital literacy consists of a wide variety of professional computing skills for the use and production of media and participation in social networks. In this context, I think this skill is for rather a more technical expertise."

Skills Missing or Expected to be included in the SSC 2018

This section consists of the skills the participants considered missing or should be included in the SSC. Accordingly, the skills stated by the participants were combined under categories and presented in Table 4 after being digitized.

Table 4. Skills Missing or Expected to be included in the SSC 2018

Categories	Skills	Number of Skills	Repetition Frequency
Basic Communication and Social Skills	Leadership (4), Harmony and adaptation (3), Cross-cultural communication and participation (3), Foreign language (3), Active listening (2), Negotiation and agreement (1), Persuasion (1), Effective use of body language (1), Coexistence (1), Positive approach (1), Global citizenship (1), Collaboration (1), Public speaking (1), Communicating with others (1), Organization (1).	**15**	**25**
Cognitive Thinking Skills	Creative thinking (4), Interpretation (4), Logical and common-sense thinking (2), Reading comprehension (2), Dialectical thinking (1), Reflective thinking (1), Analysis (1), Synthesis (1), Establishing cause and effect relationship (1), Discovery (1), Discussion (1), Dreaming (1) Looking from different perspectives (1)	**13**	**21**
Personal Skills	Self-knowledge (3), Self-confidence (3), Emotional intelligence (1), Stress management (1), Anxiety management (1), Controlling emotions (1), Setting goals (1), Discipline (1), objectivity (1)	**9**	**13**
Practical Study and Learning Skills	Time management (3), Planning or strategizing (2), Systematic study (2), Setting goals (1), Accessing and organizing information (1), and Learning to learn (1).	**6**	**10**
Daily Life Skills	First aid (2), Traffic skill (1), Life Skills (1), Efficient use of resources (1),	**4**	**5**
Literacy Skills	Social studies literacy (1), Historical literacy (1), Art literacy (1), Information literacy (1)	**4**	**4**
Psychomotor Skills	Material design (1), drawing and interpreting maps (1), Using information technologies (1), Using manual skills (1)	**4**	**4**
Others (not considered as skills)	Historical consciousness (2), Historical Awareness (1), Awareness of national consciousness and values (1), Awareness of non-governmental organizations (1), Cultural awareness (1), Self-sacrifice (1), Self-efficacy (1), Perseverance and motivation (1), Self-orientation (1), Respect for the rights of others (1), Complying with the social, moral order (1), Understanding our rights and freedoms (1), Service orientation (1)	**13**	**14**
Total		**68**	**96**

Table 4 shows that the most frequently repeated skill categories were essential communication and social skills, cognitive thinking skills, personal skills, practical study, and learning skills, respectively. These categories were followed by daily life skills, literacy, and psychomotor skills. Additionally, skills suggested

by the participants but not evaluated as skills because of the analysis were included under the others category.

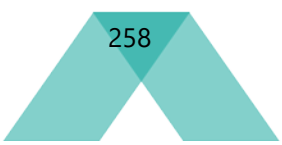
The participants mainly emphasized leadership, harmony and adaptation, cross-cultural communication and participation, foreign language, and active listening skills under the essential communication and social skills category. Furthermore, the following skills were considered missing or expected to be included in the SSC by only one participant each: negotiation and agreement, persuasion, effective use of body language, coexistence, positive approach, global citizenship, collaboration, public speaking, communicating with others, and organization. P54's views about leadership skill, which was mostly repeated under this category, were remarkable. "I think there is minimal initiative and care for leadership training. Schools aim to raise leaders for society and bring students into society. However, I think our country has shortcomings in this regard. Therefore, more emphasis should be placed on this key skill." P18's views on the harmony and adaptation skill, which was also most emphasized under this category, were as follows:

> Being open to innovations and adapting is essential to learning new things quickly and efficiently and gaining flexibility against changing conditions. ... For the ever-changing and developing world, this skill should be on the social studies table.

Another skill most expressed in the essential communication and social skills category was intercultural communication and participation. P26 pointed out the necessity of cross-cultural communication and participation skills with the following statement: "Our age is the digital information age, and we can interact with our peers thousands of kilometers away from us on the internet with one click. By getting to know different cultures and communicating with them, our children should prepare for the future and improve themselves by increasing their knowledge." Regarding the foreign language skill, another skill mostly repeated under this category, the participants generally emphasized that it was important for students to improve their language skills to better understand and interact with people from different cultures and prepare themselves better for the future. Similarly, the active listening skill, which was most repeated in this category, emphasized that this skill was crucial for students to establish stronger communication and understand others better.

As for the skills under the cognitive thinking skills category, we found that the participants mainly emphasized creative thinking, interpretation, logical and common sense thinking, and reading comprehension skills. In the previous question, it was determined that most participants (n=31) thought there was no need to include creative thinking skills in the curriculum. Here, however, it is remarkable that some participants (n=4) had creative thinking as one of the skills they most frequently suggested for the curriculum. The analyzes show that students who recommend creative thinking for the curriculum are the participants who negatively evaluated the removal of this skill from the 2018 curriculum in the previous question. Additionally, the skills mentioned by only one participant were dialectical thinking, reflective thinking, and analysis, synthesis, establishing the cause-and-effect relationship, discovery, and discussion, dreaming, and looking from different perspectives. P4 stated their views on creativity skills supporting these findings: "Thanks to creative thinking, humanity has gained many things such as television, radio, computers, and spaceships. Thanks to creativity, literature, art, music, and architectural works. Creativity is in all affective and intellectual activities, in all kinds of studies and endeavors." P19 expressed their opinion about the interpretation skill under this category, saying, "Thanks to this skill, students comment about and criticize the subject they read. The reading interpretation skill can provide different skills such as understanding, interpreting and criticizing what is read."

Under the personal skills category, the participants mainly emphasized self-knowledge and self-confidence skills. Other skills expressed by only one participant under this category were emotional intelligence, stress management, anxiety management, controlling emotions, setting goals, discipline, and objectivity. Participants believed that the self-knowledge skill was necessary for individuals to know themselves, recognize their abilities, develop these aspects and guide their preferences. P23's views



supported these findings: "Most people live without discovering their talents. If this skill can be acquired, students can realize their abilities, develop themselves, and turn to their interests." Regarding self-confidence, another skill frequently repeated under this category, the participants stated that it was important for students to be at peace with themselves, express their feelings and thoughts easily, be entrepreneurs, etc.

Under the practical study and learning skills category, the participants mainly emphasized time management, planning or strategizing, and systematic study. Other skills specified only by one participant were setting goals, accessing information, organizing information, and learning to learn. The participants' opinions about the time management skill evinced that they believed that the students could use time more effectively and understand the value of time and that it would thus make a significant contribution to their personal and business lives. Moreover, it was emphasized that planning or strategizing and systematic study skills were essential to put students' lives in a systematic, designed, and orderly structure. Some of the participants' views on these findings were as follows:

> P52: I would add the systematic study skill because if a person spends every point of their life studying systematically and programmed, they will become helpful individuals for themselves and society.
>
> P47: Using time effectively is an important skill for individuals that must be acquired to conduct good time management and plans in today's active life and rush. ...

Regarding other categories, while the participants included first aid, traffic, life skills, and efficient use of resources under daily life skills, they had social studies literacy, historical literacy, art literacy, and information literacy under literacy skills. Furthermore, material design, drawing and interpreting maps, using information technologies, and using manual skills were mentioned under psychomotor skills. Since the concepts suggested by teacher candidates, such as historical consciousness, historical awareness, awareness of national consciousness and values, awareness of non-governmental organizations, cultural awareness, self-efficacy, perseverance and motivation, and self-orientation were not evaluated as skills, these were given under the others category. The high frequency of repetition of the suggestions in the others category is a remarkable finding. It showed that the present knowledge about skill in the participants' minds was incomplete or erroneous.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Various skills that are desired to be gained by new generations are determined through the curriculum. The acquisition of these skills depends on school teachers' proper application of these curricula. Nevertheless, for a teacher to successfully equip students with the skills envisaged by the program in the lessons, they must first comprehend the curriculum's philosophy, objectives, achievements, skills, and expertise to apply them in the classroom environment. Being competent and equipped to achieve this depends on good undergraduate education and continuous professional development. All these make the studies with teachers and teacher candidates valuable to obtain clues about the quality of the teacher training system and the adequacy of the curriculum. Thus, this study aimed to contribute to the literature by analyzing SS teacher candidates' opinions about SSC skills. Because of the findings, we presented the research results to the reader under four themes. These themes are the essential skills in SSC, the least necessary skills in SSC, opinions on skills not included in SSC 2018, and skills missing or expected to be included in SSC.

This study displayed that the participants mainly emphasized communication, empathy, innovative thinking, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills as the most significant. Furthermore, using Turkish correctly, beautifully, and effectively shared fifth place regarding the frequency of problem solving. In addition to these skills, research, self-control, social participation, collaboration, entrepreneurship, observation, and decision-making skills were among the significant. In general, the participants

highlighted these skills because they considered them the basic skills most needed in social life and to be possessed by influential citizens. This result also showed that the participant's perceptions of the skills mentioned above were more positive than other skills, and they had a certain level of awareness. Therefore, they can pay more attention to their students' acquisition of these skills when they become teachers in the future and show extra effort. Another significant result was that none of the participants included media literacy, perception of space, and drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, and diagrams among the top five skills considered most significant.
Regarding the studies reached in the literature, the only one addressing the skill hierarchies of teachers and students in the SSC belonged to Çelikkaya et al. (2019). This study, which deals with the skills that social studies teachers want their students to acquire and those that 8th-grade students wish to have developed according to the skills in the curriculum, evinced that communication, empathy, and problem-solving were identified as the top five common skills. Moreover, critical thinking, research, empathy, and problem-solving skills were also included in all rankings. These results showed that the skill hierarchies of both the SS teacher candidates and teachers and students were parallel. Likewise, the research conducted by Gut (2011) determined that 43 master's students in the teacher-training program, including the SS, would mainly include communication and collaboration, creativity and innovation, and critical thinking and problem-solving skills in their lessons.

The results obtained in the literature were generally parallel to the results of this theme. Accordingly, it is evident that various segments perceived specific thinking skills, especially communication, as the most significant. Nevertheless, different results may be achieved in applied skill teaching. For instance, Fischer, Bol, and Pribesh (2011) revealed that high-level thinking skills were rarely supported in high school SS lessons. However, as the application dimension of the skills is beyond the limits of this research, we will not discuss it here.

Another important finding of this study was that the top five skills considered least significant were financial literacy, media literacy, legal literacy, perception of space, and digital literacy, respectively. Besides these, we determined that the participants considered the skills of recognizing stereotypes and prejudices, location analysis, political literacy, using evidence, and drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, and diagrams less significant than others did. These results showed that the participants considered especially literacy skills less significant. It should be pointed out that SS teacher candidates did not consider the skills expressed in this theme insignificant; however, some skills were considered less important because a hierarchy and priority-posteriority relationship were established. None of the participants included communication skills among the least essential five skills under this theme. At the same time, they gave a tiny place to problem-solving, critical thinking, innovative thinking, self-control, and research. In other words, the participants cared about these skills, and this result supported the results in the first theme. The literature review evinced that Çelikkaya et al. (2019) achieved similar results to the above findings. Although Çelikkaya et al. (2019) did not ask participant SS teachers to rank the least essential skills in the program, none included financial literacy, using evidence, location analysis, and perception of space even once in their top five choices. Observation and political literacy skills were preferred only once. Similarly, in Gut's (2011) study, teacher candidates identified the media literacy skill as the least significant among communication and technology group skills.

Further results displayed that the participants considered the omission of the creative thinking and using information and communication technologies skills from the 2018 SSC, which were included in the 2005 SSC, a positive development in general, as they believed that both skills had alternatives in the program. The Participants considered innovative thinking an alternative to creative thinking and digital literacy for using information and communication technologies.

Some participants even stated that innovative thinking covered creative thinking and digital literacy covered using information and communication technologies, while some believed they were

synonymous. However, the theoretical foundations of these skills in the literature revealed that, despite similar characteristics, they are indeed skills with different sub-dimensions. This showed that some SS teacher candidates did not have comprehensive knowledge of these skills and had some misperceptions.

The participants suggested 68 different skills regarding the skills considered missing in the SSC or expected to be added to the program. An analysis of these skills categorically showed that the participants mostly prioritized "basic communication and social skills," "cognitive thinking skills," and "personal skills." The participants especially suggested leadership, harmony and adaptation, cross-cultural communication, foreign language, and active listening within essential communication and social skills; creative thinking, interpretation, logical and commonsense thinking, reading comprehension within cognitive thinking skills; and self-knowledge and self-confidence within personal skills. The participants also shared opinions about the curriculum in the categories of effective study and learning skills, daily life skills, literacy skills, and psychomotor skills. Analysis of the skills suggested by the participants in this theme, regardless of the categories in which they are included, evinced that leadership, creative thinking, interpretation, harmony, and adaptation, cross-cultural communication and participation, foreign language, self-knowledge, self-confidence and time management were the most pronounced skills, respectively. It is striking that the creative thinking skill included in the 2005 curriculum but omitted from the 2018 curriculum was one of the most emphasized skills. This showed that some participants considered the omission of the creativity skill a deficiency. Apart from these, 13 of the 68 skills suggested by the participants were not considered skills because of the analyses, and they were included in the others category. Although there is no widely accepted skill list or standard in the literature, it is thought provoking that some participants present many invalid skill suggestions. This result indicated that some participants did not fully grasp what skill means. Mutluer's (2013) research results supported this judgment where they revealed that the SS teachers did not have sufficient knowledge about the skills in the curriculum and the teaching of these skills. Similarly, Karademir, Sarıkahya, and Altunsoy (2017) found that science teachers had insufficient knowledge about the concept of skill.

To ensure that students successfully acquire the skills in the curriculum in the SS classes, the teacher must first be familiar with the skills in question, gain awareness of the importance of skill training, and know how the skills can be taught. Undoubtedly, undergraduate education is crucial in the acquisition of all these competencies. Therefore, throughout undergraduate education, SS teacher candidates should apprehend the importance of the skills in the relevant courses, especially Social Studies Education Programs and Social Studies Teaching 1-2, and gain practical experience in teaching skills with courses such as Teaching Practice.

Having revealed the skill hierarchies of the SS candidate teachers in the study can explain the skill profile in their minds. The perceptions of the candidates towards skills can affect their teaching when they become teachers. As is known, teachers tend to teach more about the subjects they care about. Subjects that are deemed less important can be quickly avoided. Therefore, understanding their skills world can give some clues about the skills training to be provided in undergraduate education, and thus, necessary measures can be taken.

Considering the general skill profile put forth by the SS teacher candidates, this study revealed that thinking skills such as critical thinking, creative thinking, and problem-solving were attached more importance; however, various literacy skills such as financial literacy, media literacy, legal literacy, digital literacy, and political literacy remained in the background (Table 1). Put another way, the skills that the SS candidate teachers considered least significant were primarily related to literacy skills in different fields. Therefore, prospective teachers should be taught the importance of various literacy skills in the program in the relevant undergraduate courses. Indeed, Beyer (2008) emphasized the obligation of

academic staff to master multiple skills to teach prospective teachers an understanding of social studies and history during undergraduate education and train them as influential citizens who learn lifelong.

Finally, this study was limited to the SS candidate teachers who completed the 2nd grade. The fact that 4th-grade students who are about to complete their teacher education are not included in the study can be seen as a limitation because it is possible to say that some courses, such as "Media Literacy and Education," will enable them to gain knowledge and experience about skills after the 2nd grade. In this study, the reason why especially 2nd-grade teacher candidates were chosen is that they have a comprehensive knowledge of both the program and the skills in the program since they have just successfully passed the "Social Studies Education Programs" course. In future studies, quantitative studies can be conducted at different grade levels and on a more comprehensive sample group. Furthermore, it can be examined longitudinally how the skill hierarchies of teacher candidates vary from 1st grade to 4th grade. Additionally, different from this study, the competencies of teacher candidates in teaching skills and applications can be investigated.

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Author biography

Murat Bayram Yılar works as an Assoc. Prof. in the department of social studies education at the Ondokuz Mayıs University. In the past, he worked as a teacher and administrator in public schools. He received a Ph.D. degree in social studies education from Ataturk University in 2015. His research interests are cooperative learning, curriculum, digital citizenship, and textbooks.