

AN ASSESSMENT OF 4th AND 7th GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTION IN TERMS OF HISTORICAL THINKING SKILLS

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Abstract – *The latest approach to history education requires that students should be educated not as passive recipients of encyclopedic knowledge but as empowered individuals playing an active role in the knowledge generation process. This can be achieved by teaching students how to generate historical knowledge and by introducing historical thinking skills. The objective of this study is to assess the learning activities used by 4th and 7th Grade teachers in order to improve elementary school pupils' historical thinking skills. The study was conducted in six public and three private elementary schools in the Seyhan district of Adana in Turkey. The 4th and 7th Grade units entitled 'History, Our First Homeland and Anatolia in History' and 'The Ottoman Empire in the 19th and 20th Centuries', respectively, were examined. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview and participant observation, and analyzed by means of content analysis. In conclusion, it was found that activities encouraging the development of historical thinking skills were not adequately emphasized by the teachers, and that the teachers utilized only the course book as their material for course presentations.*

Introduction

1 In recent research concerning the organization of learning and teaching, there is an inclination to move away from objective towards constructive understanding. According to the principles of constructive understanding, learning is configured on the advance knowledge of the students. Constructivists propose that we learn through our experiences, and interpretation of these experiences is based on our advance knowledge and on active thinking. They do not believe that knowledge can simply be transferred from the teacher to the student. One cannot know as the other does because people do not normally go through the same process of experience. Even if they did, their interpretations would be different as they would be associating the new with different advance experiences. Teaching is a process of leading the students to construct their own meanings from their experiences by providing such experiences and guiding them

to be appreciative. The most important issue regarding knowledge and skills is their practice. Constructivism asserts that skills become more meaningful when achieved through contexts enabling logical association (Jonassen, Peck, & Wilson, 1999).

Studies on how learning comes about and how the mind works show that we construct new ideas around our already existing images. Research on teaching history give important clues as to the historical thinking skills of children and adolescents and their previous conceptualization in relation to the past. This research also shows how the previous apprehension of students is conditional upon their socio-economic environment, memory and experiences, as well as how they considerably diverge from each other. Jadallah (2000) claims that, in the course of research, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating the incoming information, the process of learning should allow the students to import the knowledge they would use for understanding and interpreting the new coming knowledge and the knowledge they would construct on their advance knowledge.

In traditional history education, the main textbook is used as the only resource for teaching and learning, thus making the book's point of view the only truth for students. However, this constitutes a big obstacle in the way of learning history based on one's own point of view and values. Additionally, it is not possible to understand the interpretative structure of knowledge by reading merely one book (Seixas, 1998). Students can comprehend the interpretative structure of a book or article, and the relativity of the interpretations in it, only if they are exposed to the approaches of different authors in forming the facts.

History education should mostly depend upon the sophisticated commentary skills of students on the conflicting topics where several articles and documents are used (Rouet, Britt, Mason & Perfetti, 1996). For instance, the Greek and Turkish battles during the Turkish War of Independence are narrated differently in Greek and Turkish sources. As it is rather difficult for students to combine different contents in one presentation, they are in a position to select the information carefully and evaluate it from the author's point of view, the type of historical source, and their relationship with other documents. Instead of building up knowledge from individual texts, students should be able to manage different presentations, tackle the incoherencies among them and evaluate the knowledge presented within the scope of the sources while studying a historical problem.

Providing the students with different viewpoints on specific issues is helpful in helping them build up a more elaborate and enhanced comprehension.

'Different texts present opportunities for history teachers to help students engage in *sourcing* (who wrote the texts, where did they appear), *contextualizing* (in what time period were they written, what was the climate in which they were written) and *corroboration* (how do they

compare and contrast). In helping students look at these elements they can make the argument that these texts represent the presentation of historical information as arguments rather than as 'truth'. Students can learn that history is interpreted differently by different groups at different time periods, as a result of socio-cultural and political conditions.' (Hynd, 1999, p.432)

History education in Turkey

The Turkish education system divides into two sub-sections as formal education and mass education. Formal education is offered through pre-school, primary, secondary and high education institutions. Mass education, on the other hand, covers all the educational activities held in addition to formal education. Primary education, which starts as of the end of age 6, is composed of a two-stage system, the first of which covers the 1-5th Grades, and the second of which the 6-8th Grades. Primary education is an eight-year period that lasts until the end of age 14. Secondary education, which lasts a minimum of three years between the ages 15-17, covers public high schools, and vocational and technical high schools (Erden, 1998; Ünal & Ada, 1999; Ergünes, 2002).

Instruction of history courses in Turkey starts with the life studies course in the first three Grades of primary school, continues with the Social Studies course in the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Grades; and with history courses in the secondary school. Through the choice and organization of the basic knowledge, skills, attitudes, thoughts and values introduced in these life studies, history, geography, political and natural sciences courses, children are prepared for life and given a 'consciousness of living' (Akinoglu, 2002, p.2). Social Studies is a course which aims at raising active and democratic citizens by combining the knowledge of the social dimension of life with an inter-disciplinary approach. The base for the knowledge of Social Studies is constructed by social and other sciences related with man (Doganay, 2002, p.42). However, the content of Social Studies is composed only of history, geography and political science which are introduced in different chapters as separate disciplines, without being integrated. This prevents the sciences that form the base for the knowledge of Social Studies from being examined with an inter-disciplinary approach.

The Social Studies course in our country is taught by two different types of teachers. In the 4th and 5th Grades, this course is offered by class teachers whereas in the 6th and 7th Grades, i.e. during the secondary stage of primary education, it is offered by either history or geography teachers. This, however, brings important difficulties alongside. The teachers in the secondary stage, being specialists in their branches, cannot adopt an inter-disciplinary approach. Thus, the students are

observed to lack an overall comprehension of man as a social being (Doganay, 2002, p.43).

Education of teachers has been a continuing problem in Turkey. The system of teacher education has very frequently changed, and often without taking into account the previous experiences (Öztürk, 1996). Considering the difficulties encountered in the education of Social Studies teachers, a reconstruction of faculties of education was initiated in 1998. Thereby, social studies training programs opened under the primary education departments of education faculties, and the first graduates were given in 2002. The graduate teachers offer social studies, human rights and citizenship courses, as well as principles of Atatürk and the history of the revolution at the secondary stage of primary education (Doganay, 2002, p.37).

Historiography in Turkey

In order to understand the viewpoints underlying teaching history in Turkey, one should know historiography and its advancement stages. The concept of history in the early years of the Turkish Republic was developed as a reaction towards Islamic-Ottoman history (Neumann, 1998). The main target in this period was to put on a new identity for the new republic. This turned out to be finding a 'non-Ottoman' history for the Turkish nation, and rather negative values were attributed to that history. As a result, the Ottoman period was completely ignored. In the alternative history that was created, general and especially Middle Asian Turkishness was highlighted as the tradition of the republican history. Avcioğlu (1995) defines this situation as a historical obligation, stating that in fact the bourgeoisie who made the French Revolution had reprobated feudalism which the king represented, and its institutions. Consequently, 'the Turkish' instead of 'the Ottoman' was emphasized during this period, and a history concept which would put forth the Turks' contribution to civilization was adopted. Additionally, a relation was attempted to be drawn between the Turks and the communities who lived in Anatolia in ancient times, such as Sumerians or the Hittites. Likewise, the 'Sun Language Theory' which claimed that all the languages had originated from the Turkish language was brought forward for a while.

In the 1940's, a new concept was adopted in the Turkish historiography, which increased the share of Turks within general history. Later, in the high school textbooks of the 1970's, Middle Asia had a bigger part. By handling history through a Turkish-Islamic viewpoint, the pre- and post-Islamic periods were associated with each other. For instance, it was stated that 'only Islam was apt to the Turkish people's old beliefs and thus was easily adopted and this strengthened them a lot' (Kafesoglu, 1988).

The understanding of 'Turkish-Islamic Synthesis', which has left its mark upon our time, aimed at repairing and protecting the corrupted national culture with the help of the government. In this period, Atatürk Culture, Language, and History High Institution was established under the Prime Ministry for the purpose of researching and spreading the Turkish history, culture and language. Within the framework of official structuring, the Institution was converted into a governmental body and was made the spokesman of the government's expression of 'official history'. The principles which the Institution was to implement reflect the understanding of history during this period. These principles disregarded universal values, and evoked nationalist sensations through frequently repeated statements such as 'gathering the Turkish citizens around national culture and ideals', 'protecting national moral values and traditions', 'rendering the Turkish nation the proprietor of its history that becomes its glorious past' (Official Gazette, 1983).

The concept of an alternative history against the official history represented by historians/researchers such as Halil Berktaş, Doğan Avcıoğlu, Taner Akçam has arisen as an outcome of the pressure on various segments of the society caused by the military coup of 12 September 1980. Another significant feature of the 1980's was that it had a shallow understanding of history, focusing especially on certain archive sources of Ottoman history which has no analytical dimensions (Özel & Çetinsaya, 1986). The historians supposed they were making 'historiography' only by publishing the transcriptions of the documentation they could access. The disregarding of the hermeneutic approach best fit to the nature of the social sciences prevented the meaning lying behind the language used in the documentation from being understood. Kılıçbay (cited in Özbaran, 1997) states that historians whose historical research methods lack the process of understanding consider the past merely as a process consisting of the crucial steps of reaching today. In other words, it can be said that these historians make the mistake of 'historicism' and thus fail to see the events in history as a chain of multi-dimensional relations.

Ortaylı (1998) states that there are two similarly worthless interpretations of history in Turkey which run counter to each other except for the scientific, historical information and documentation. One of these interpretations exists in the school textbooks and the other in out-of-school publications and the press, as a reaction to the first. In this way, a vain and baseless tension is created; and the real history is reflected neither at schools nor in the popular publications. Neumann (1998) agrees with these views stating that there is a wide gap between the history lessons and the science of history at present. According to him, the loose connection between the history lessons and scientific research should be tightened. This seems quite important in terms of discussing the knowledge and

interpretations of scientific value in history lessons. With the cooperation of the historian and the history teacher, these lessons could be prevented from being treated as ideological means. Moreover, as the use of primary and secondary sources is highly important in teaching history; with the help of this collaboration, studies could be held in terms of compliance of the sources with the level. Additionally, by showing how historical narrations are formed by the historian, the students can be encouraged to make small-scale history research.

The subjects introduced in the history courses in Turkey only cover the period before 1945. The lack of information about our recent history has resulted in a failure to fully understand the present developments that take place in the national and international arenas. Besides, with the transition to the multi-party system, multi-coloration and different viewpoints in the political scene came up. However, this as well as the subsequent period's not taking part in the content prevents the students from noticing these different viewpoints. Moreover, the students' ignorance of different outlooks on controversial topics makes them unable to form a synthesis based on their own knowledge.

Though there are many difficulties related with the teaching of history, the issue has been handled thoroughly not by the Institution of Turkish History or the historians but by the Institution of Philosophy. 'History Education in Turkey', the meeting organized by this institution in 1975, is considered highly significant as its first example in Turkey. In this meeting, many important historians and social scientists voiced common worries about the content of and methods used in history courses. These worries included, among others, 'emphasis on memorized knowledge', 'lack of relations with other social sciences', 'lack of a philosophical view of history', 'needless chronological knowledge', and 'avoidance of contemporary history' (Institution of Philosophy Seminars III, 1977, 35).

Tekeli (1998) has divided the criticisms against teaching history in two groups: in the first group are the criticisms of the *content* of the written history, which can be entitled 'official history'. The second group of criticisms is related to the *process* of teaching and learning. The tedium and stagnation of teaching, its being far from attracting the attention of the students, and consequently driving them away from history can be included in this group. Tekeli claims that the solution would be a scientific history, written free from all ideologies and based only on objective facts. Yet, there is a basic logical fallacy in this very optimistic thought. We learn history not only within the framework of facts but through the works of the historians as well, which inevitably include their own viewpoints and comments while combining the evidence from the past within the framework of cause and effect relations.

When history books are examined, two main characteristics are noticed. First, there are deviations and distortions in these books caused by the nationalist views which have reached their climax with the Turkish History Thesis, which aims at

creating a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘the others’. Upon even a minor victory of the Turks, the comment is: ‘The glorious Turkish army has inflicted a giant defeat on the enemies who wish to raid us on all occasions’; whereas upon a defeat: ‘The treacherous enemy has murdered our defenseless soldiers in their sleep’. Humiliating the contrary communities and creating a sense of national superiority are considered much more important than the factual defects. This can be due to the mission attributed to the history courses. Emphasizing social aims and disregarding the aims of inner-discipline in the goals of teaching history is a sign of this (Dilek, 1999, p.42).

It can be said that, due to the traditions from the past, one of the most serious problems of today’s history teaching in Turkey is a steady understanding in the education policy produced and executed by the Ministry of National Education. Additionally, handling the subject problems with short-term solutions and implementing different models of education with each changing government have made up another dimension of the problem.

In shaping history training, the National Education Council, which is the highest advisory board for the Ministry of National Education, has played an important role. Having examined the agenda of the Council meetings, the issues related with history training can be dated back to the agenda of the 2nd National Education Council held as early as 1943. Suggestions on the textbooks, problems of teachers and teaching, auxiliary information and equipment necessary for history teaching were discussed in the meetings of this Council. The emphasis in the textbooks was our national history; and the information on other nations was given in rate of their relations with our nation (Ministry of Education—The Second Council of the Ministry of Education, 1991, pp.199-205).

Development plans are another determining factor in history teaching policies. The principles to be implemented in the realization of the education services which take place in the 8th Five-Year Development Plan which covers the years 2001-2005 is deemed to solve the existing problems and meet the requirements. With this plan, an education policy was foreseen which aims ‘to raise productive and creative individuals of the age of knowledge, devoted to Atatürk’s principles and revolutions; having improved thinking, perception and problem solving skills; democratic, libertarian and devoted to moral values; open to new ideas; having personal responsibility; imbibe national culture; capable of interpreting different cultures and contributing to contemporary civilization; predisposed to science and technology production, with high level of skills’ (State Planning Organization, 2000). In addition to this, education programs, teaching techniques, tools and materials were planned to be reorganized within universal measures, taking into consideration development aims and technological progress. However, these principles largely remained on paper, concrete steps not having been taken.

The mission attributed to history courses in the Turkish education system appears to be more in the direction of developing consciousness of citizenship and socialization. In other words, this course is handled within the framework of social aims, with little consideration of its inner disciplinary aims. Besides, the general aims of the history course on classroom level and the content prepared accordingly are beyond being coherent or meeting specific aims. No target was specified particularly for perceiving differences, questioning ideas, and achieving the skill of criticism.

Historical thinking

According to Korbin & Abbot (1993), to make history education authentic means to give students authority in definition and interpretation, a skill often possessed by sophisticated historians. In order to think and work like historians, students should be able to accept and manipulate a range of sophisticated skills and attitudes. In other words, they should acquire historical thinking skills. These skills require that students (Nash, 1996):

- generate questions
- arrange reliable evidence to support their questions
- search historical records beyond those offered in their books
- consider documentation, periodicals, diaries, historical places, work of arts, historical findings and other evidences belonging to the past
- search these records taking the conditions of the relevant era into consideration, and compare events through multiple viewpoints.

Seixas (1993) presents three elements regarding historical thinking. The first element consists of the ability of students to define facts of historical significance which requires contemplation about attributing importance to historical events. Therefore, one should be aware of how the thinker's epistemological viewpoint affects his document examination and interpretation style. Within this structure, thinking is a knowledge level attributing a meaning to the past. At this stage, the students are supposed to respond to the following questions: 'What are the important things belonging to the past?' and 'Why are they so important?' To exhibit such a skill, students need factual knowledge and criteria differentiating the important from the unimportant.

The second element according to Seixas (1993) concerns historical epistemology. This is the capability of refining, revising and enlarging historical knowledge through evidence and relying on the authorities. It is what students

know and how they learn about the past. How much do they believe in the possibility of knowing about the past? Their evidence might be more or less complicated, or might be clearly bound to each other or not. Students mostly depend on the authorities. However, their selections of authorities are not always secure. They might also have several criteria for internal and external consistency. Besides, in order to be able to separate the right from the wrong, students might exhibit different reliability levels in accordance with their skills.

The third element covers three interrelated points: agency, empathy and moral judgment. Historical agency expresses the consequences of man's choices, decisions, and actions in the past. The design of the historical agency is important for people to comprehend their interaction with the socio-cultural situation surrounding them. Without this tool, students cannot find themselves in the same world with the historical figures they study. Consequently, they cannot attribute meaning to history. Students working on historical empathy see historical figures as people facing decisions, conflicts, restrictions, and problems but thinking in a completely different way than they do. It is not possible to draw a meaning from a past story without moral judgment either directly or indirectly in any case.

These three elements involve using the required tools for the historical inquiry process as well as the skill of contextualizing the past. Contextualizing the past requires the use of imagination, empathy, and moral judgment in order to avoid evaluating the past within present points of view because the only way to understand what happened in the past is to take the circumstances of that era into consideration. Two main aspects of contextualizing the past include (a) progress and regression (b) continuity and change.

VanSledright (1998) indicates that, for the development of the process of historical thinking, history teachers are required to:

1. interrogate the students
2. ask students to support their historical claims by evidence
3. understand how socio-cultural, local, ethnic and family background influence the way of thinking of their students
4. teach their students how to ask questions to each other
5. emphasize the importance of doing research with rich historical contents, and
6. give their students the tools of inquiry to encourage a thorough investigation.

The most important and implementation-based stage of historical thinking is its inquiry aspect. According to Van Sledright (1998), to enhance the historical content by multiple and varied interpretations is the starting point of inquiry.

Instructions are quite important when teachers lead their students to fill the gaps within these interpretations by emphatic and imaginary skills. To ensure this, they should set up a platform surrounded by the reading of secondary sources, corroborating accounts, and engaging sourcing techniques. They should also make their students direct these tools towards their historical assumptions and viewpoints which construct their own historical positionalities.

To sum up, a successful history teacher asks questions to the students and uses enhanced contents integrated into the inquiry tools. The teacher becomes a model within the process, showing the presentation of the inquiry, and leading the students to ask questions about their historical position.

Underneath the problems regarding teaching history lies the undefined aim of teaching history in a precise way. In other words, answers to the questions ‘What should be the aim of history lessons?’, ‘Why should the determined content be learned?’ and ‘How should the learning-teaching processes be organized in order to maintain more permanent, meaningful and efficient learning?’ are ambiguous. However, one of the basic aims of teaching history is to develop historical thinking skills in the students. The concept of teaching history in Turkey is, however, rather distant from this aim. Consequently, the number of students who read, understand what they read, establish a relation of causality between historical realities, and develop their own comments and views after having evaluated different viewpoints is quite small. Therefore, it is considered that most of the problems about the teaching of history can be solved with the in-class acquisition of historical thinking skills.

In brief, one can conclude that the examination of historical thinking skills plays an important role in seeking a synthesis of different viewpoints, and in analyzing and investigating the historical knowledge of the students. However, no other study done in the country has yet looked into ways of improving historical thinking skills through easily accessible sources. This study will contribute to determining the activities in 4th and 7th Grade courses which are in accordance with the improvement of historical thinking skills.

The objective of the study

The main objective of this study is to determine how 4th and 7th Grade elementary school teachers improve the historical thinking skills of their students. In line with this main objective, answers to the following questions have been sought for:

1. What do teachers do towards improving historical thinking skills and how do they manage this?

2. Is there any coherence between the activities that teachers use in their classrooms to improve students' historical thinking skills, as recorded during observations, and the answers they have given to the interview questions?

Method

This research study aims to determine the activities used by primary school teachers in order to develop students' historical thinking skills. It is a descriptive case statement designed on the basis of qualitative research techniques.

The data collection techniques employed in the study, namely interviews and observations, are among the most widely used data collection techniques in qualitative studies. As the researcher observed the classes from one of the rear desks and as there was no interaction with the teacher or students, the researcher has taken the role of a 'non-participative observer'. The reason why the interview technique was also used as a data collection tool is to present different viewpoints in the interpretation and description of the observation data. The observation findings have been evaluated together with the interview findings in order to eliminate any bias on the part of the researchers.

At the first stage of the research, information was obtained from the teachers through observations and interviews. At the second stage, data came from both the teachers and students, again through observations and interviews, and thus, 'data triangulation' was achieved (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

The study was conducted in six public and three private schools in the Seyhan District of Adana in Turkey. The sample consisted of 4th Grade classroom teachers and 7th Grade social studies teachers. In the Turkish elementary school system, history is first introduced in the 4th Grade as part of the social studies curriculum. The content of the course covers the concept of history, time, place and so on. Students are also expected to discuss the question, 'Why do we learn history?' This course is completed in the 7th Grade, and is substituted by 'History of Turkish Revolution' in later Grades.

With this curriculum, one expects historical thinking skills to develop within the period of 4th to 7th Grades. These years mark the beginning and ending of history education in elementary schools and this explains the reason why the 4th and 7th Grades were selected for the purposes of this study.

The sample

The teachers who participated in the research were chosen from among those who work at the elementary education institutions of the Seyhan District of Adana,

and possibility based sampling technique was used. First of all, a list of the elementary education institutions in the Seyhan District of Adana was made. Among the teachers working at the contacted schools, 18 teachers who agreed to take part in the research were chosen. Twelve of these work at public schools and six in private schools.

Most teachers who participated in the study had between 21 and 30 years of work experience. However, among the private school group, there were teachers with 31-plus years of experience. Whereas the degrees of the representative group teachers from the 7th Grade differed, the 4th Grade teachers mostly had 'Open University / Two-year college' degrees.

Data collection

Data were collected by 'participant observation' and 'semi-structured interviews'. The observations were carried out in the social studies courses during a 3-hour period of teaching on different days. During these observation sessions, all of the teacher activities concerning teaching history were recorded by taking descriptive notes. Thus, data were collected in the class environment during regular class hours. The researchers sat at one of the back seats and had no communication with the students or the teacher.

'Semi-structured interview forms' were also used in the study. In the preparation stage of the form, relevant literature was reviewed and the general objectives of the social studies courses as well as the specific class level objectives were examined. In accordance with the data obtained from the literature, the essence of historical thinking skill development was taken into account and a semi-structured interview form was prepared. Certain corrections to the form were made in accordance with the comments made by several experts. Similarly, upon the conclusion of a pilot implementation, several questions which proved problematic were excluded from the form. The final version consisted of 13 questions and also several others aimed at collecting personal information. Recordings lasted 30 minutes. Data were noted by hand.

Data analysis

Qualitative evaluative measures were used to analyze the data collected from the assignment tools. Analytic coding based on the Strauss and Corbin Grounded Theory Procedure was used to classify and categorize the collected information (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The data obtained from the observation was first transcribed to a word processing program and a raw data text was obtained. Following this, the text was evaluated several times and coded using line-by-line

reading techniques. While coding, the ‘repetitive reading’ and ‘drilling through literature’ procedures were affirmed. After creating the codes, the following categories were built: materials, techniques, explaining the importance of the content, activities to improve thinking, different viewpoints, and giving inquiry assignments.

As for the interviews, the data obtained from interviewees were transcribed to a word processing program. At the second stage, the answers obtained from each teacher for each question were collected in columns. Thirdly, after reading the texts several times, the researchers evaluated them using a line-by-line reading technique and generated a coding strategy. ‘Drilling through literature’ and ‘repetitive reading’ procedures were repeated where necessary during the reading process. Afterwards, proper categories were set up in accordance with the literature and coding. The results obtained from interview analysis were represented according to ‘the approach of categorized data expression,’ which was recommended by Miles & Huberman (1994). Categories were ranked as follows: history education, teaching of history content, and the improvement of historical thinking skills.

In order to support the comments of researchers and reflect the viewpoints of the participants, some quotations from the interview are given.

Abbreviations that were used reflected school type and class level as in the following: (PU7): PU for Public school, 7 for 7th Grade, and (PR4): PR for Private School, 4 for 4th Grade.

Findings

The aim of this study was to determine the activities used by 4th and 7th Grade teachers in order to improve students’ historical thinking skills during the course process. In this part of the study, ‘the findings from the interview analysis’ are slotted.

Findings obtained from the observation analysis

The activities employed by the classroom teachers are classified in the following categories: materials, techniques, explaining the importance of the content, activities to improve thinking, different viewpoints, and inquiry assignments.

The main tool was the textbook for all teachers in both Grades. It was found that most of the 4th Grade teachers utilized the board, maps and historical scales. The 7th Grade teachers, on the other hand, utilized only maps.

The question-answer technique was used by all the teachers during their courses in the 4th and 7th Grade classes. It was also observed that most of them referred to student and teacher narration techniques. More than half of the 4th and 7th Grade teachers made the students write in their notebooks, underline the articles or use analogy and similar techniques, as well as traditional group activities.

Three of the 4th and five of the 7th Grade teachers mentioned the importance of the content. To give an example:

'Çanakkale War is noteworthy because it caused the death of many intellectual people. For instance, entire classes from Galatasaray High School vanished because students went to war and died.' (PU7)

It was seen that most of the teachers used cause-effect relationship activities in order to improve students' thinking. They made the students correlate to the present and thus influenced their thinking. It was also observed that they related occurrences from different eras, got the students to interpret, matched those different occurrences and thus the disciplines were interrelated. These activities were mostly done by 7th Grade teachers. One of the 4th and one of the 7th Grade teachers asked hypothetical questions, and two of the 4th Grade teachers emphasized that the activity of evaluating events should be in accordance with present circumstances.

Respective examples related to activities in the classroom are as follows:

To begin with, few teachers attempted to introduce different viewpoints, and it was observed that four of the 4th Grade teachers approached facts from a one-sided viewpoint. There was only one teacher from the 4th Grade and one from the 7th Grade who used multiple-viewpoints.

'The teacher said 'we are always proud of having founded 16 different states and of our past. We never mention those states we demolished'. The teacher also indicated that history is a science, and that we should react realistically and learn lessons from history because there is no way to be successful by excess pride. He said we are always proud of being the grandchildren of Mehmed the Conqueror and Suleyman the Magnificent who were among the sultans of the Ottoman Empire, but nobody wants to be the grandchild of Crazy Ibrahim.' (PU4)

Only one of the 7th Grade teachers and six of the 4th Grade teachers gave inquiry assignments. The topics of the homework were: 'Collecting encyclopedic data about the Orhun Monuments', 'Answering preparation questions' and 'Searching the meaning of Asakiri Mansure-i Muhammediye.'

TABLE 1: Teachers' Qualification on the Observed Criteria

OBSERVED CRITERIA	TEACHERS																Total (n)		
	4th Grade						7th Grade						Total						
	Public School			Private School			Public School			Private School									
1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3		
Materials	Textbook	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
	Board	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	6
	Map	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	6
	Historical atlas	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
	Historical scale	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
	Miscellaneous (laser pen, draw cards, calendar, source book)	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
	Teacher narration	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
	Student narration,	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
	Question – answer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	9
	Discussion	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Technique	Traditional group study	-	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
	Dramatization or picture study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
	Other (taking notes in a notebook, reading from the book, underlining, analogy)	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7

TABLE 2: Teachers' Qualification on the Observed Criteria

OBSERVED CRITERIA	TEACHERS																		Total (n)							
	4th Grade Public School						Private School						7th Grade Public School							Private School						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3								
Explaining the importance of the content	-	√	√	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	√	-	-	√	-	-	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	5
Establishing cause-effect relations	-	√	√	√	√	√	-	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	9
Interpretation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Asking hypothetical questions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Relating to the present	-	√	-	√	-	-	-	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	-	-	√	7
Correlating with other events of the era	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	3
Correlating with the events of different eras	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	3
Evaluating the events in accordance with the era's circumstances	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Interdisciplinary correlation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
One-sided viewpoint	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	√	-	-	√	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Multiple viewpoints	-	-	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Inquiry Assignments	√	√	-	√	-	-	-	√	√	-	√	√	√	√	√	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6

(√): Teachers who executed the criteria

(-): Teachers who didn't execute the criteria

Findings obtained from the interview analysis

General information about history education

In relation to history education, findings are concentrated on the general purposes of history education and whether history teachers like to teach history.

When asked about the objective of teaching history, both the 4th and the 7th Grade teachers indicated that teaching history meant making a correlation between the past and the future, as well as learning lessons from the past. In addition to these, two of the teachers described it as teaching one's own history, and one teacher as presenting multiple viewpoints. Only one teacher emphasized that the aim of teaching history was to improve students' thinking, to satisfy the expectations of the society and to develop consciousness about history:

'From my viewpoint, the first objective is to satisfy the expectations of the society. Grandfathers tell their grandchildren 'you should have learned this better'. Things like these are told about history and expected to be taught at school. I aim to give a spirit. My real target is to develop historical thinking.' (PU7)

When asked about whether they liked giving history courses, both the 4th and 7th Grade teachers made explanations on different grounds. The teachers expressed their pleasure in teaching history courses through the following statements: 'I teach our own history', 'I have the opportunity to mention different viewpoints', 'I can build cause-effect relationships', 'I can talk more when working on history topics and I can impersonate these topics'. On the other hand, those teachers who did not like teaching history courses said: 'the curriculum is not well-organized', 'the subjects do not arouse interest', or 'I do not like it because of the many details and the fact that students learn by memorizing the information presented'.

Information about the contents of teaching history

The preparations that teachers make before lessons, their lecturing techniques and materials, and the ways they make students participate in the courses are recorded in this section.

Answering the question about their preparation stage for the courses, all of the 7th Grade teachers both in public and private schools indicated that they make their daily lecture plans, read from the textbook and utilize private publications. Two of the teachers emphasized that they come to class ready to answer questions from students, and six of them said that they themselves prepared the materials required for the lesson.

When they were asked what kind of tools and materials they used during the lessons, the 7th Grade teachers answered that they made use of textbooks, maps, history atlases, CDs, overhead projectors, and encyclopedias while the 4th Grade teachers stated that they also made use of unit supplementary materials in addition to these sources. Besides one of the 7th Grade teachers indicated that she used the board efficiently and another one said that she made use of cartoons and primary sources. Similarly, one 4th Grade teacher stated that she used the photos she took, another said she used videos and yet another said she used pictures.

While nine of the teachers who participated in the research made no comments on whether their schools were satisfactory in terms of tools and materials; five said that they were short of tools and materials at school while four stated that they found the tools and materials sufficient.

When they were asked about the techniques they used when giving history courses, both the 4th and 7th Grade teachers stated that they used the techniques of narration, question-answer, discussion, demonstration, and dramatization, in general. One of the teachers added that she preferred narration by the student, which she described as an active method; and the other indicated that she used the technique of making the student read and write down the content (she uses the term 'method' for 'technique').

'What we mean by 'active method' is a student-oriented and teacher-led method. I never ask who will answer a question or who is prepared for class. There is no rule for it. Students are always in a position to prepare for class. At the end of the term, I give marks taking their in-class activities into consideration.' (PR7)

As for question type, 7th Grade teachers in private schools stated that they ask questions which enable the students to make interpretations and form cause-effect correlations. One of the teachers added that he asks questions based on memorization. The public school teachers gave various responses: *'I ask questions with short answers', 'I ask cause-effect type questions', 'I ask questions depending on thinking and interpretative skills, generating, bearing cause-effect relationships'.*

4th Grade teachers, on the other hand, indicated that they emphasize interpretative questions as well as examination-oriented test type questions, thought-provoking and both interpretative and memory-based questions, trying to lead them to correlate to the present. When we wanted them to give examples of these types of questions though, no one could give an answer. Only one of them replied:

'I try to get them to think with questions like: How would it affect our daily life, if the electric bulb hadn't been invented?' (PU4)

When asked about the ways they encourage student participation, they generally stated that they refer to question-answer techniques and give marks for participation. In addition to this, showing pictures depicting certain different eras and asking the students to interpret them, organizing museum visits, or creating a discussion forum using empathy questions were also used.

4th Grade teachers indicated that to ensure participation in the lectures they use discussions, student narrations, group work, test solving, interrelation activities with previous topics or actual occurrences, as well as question-answer techniques.

Information about the improvement of historical thinking skills

Regarding historical thinking skills, the following type of questions were evaluated: How do the teachers underline the importance of the content to be lectured? What do they think about the importance of chronological order? How do they lead the students to think? How do they find correlations with the present time? What are their viewpoints about the events of different eras and circumstances? Do they mention different viewpoints in their courses? Do they give inquiry assignments or not?

When asked about how they emphasize the importance of the content to be lectured, most 7th Grade teachers and only one 4th Grade teacher expressed that they make correlations to the present. The rest of the 4th Grade teachers said that they explicitly state the reason for studying each unit at the beginning of class. In addition, one private school teacher stated that he explains the importance of content through class discussions, and one public school teacher said that he emphasizes the importance of the events in accordance with the world and humanity history.

When answering the question about the importance of chronological order, all of the 7th Grade teachers who participated in the study stressed that it is vital in building up correlations between events, integrity, and a comprehensive study base. All of the teachers indicated, however, that the books have been prepared without taking the chronological order of events into consideration and that this prevented students from making correlations and comprehending the cause-effect relationships:

'Topics should be presented within a chronological order. It was so in our prior social studies books. But in the new boo, the events are given in a mixed order, which poses problems for students. Selim I dies in one unit and then we run into him again 2 units later.' (PR7)

Teachers explained that their students have an understanding of chronology, but since the events were not given in chronological order in the course book, their

knowledge becomes insufficient. Moreover, because of this problem, they have difficulty in telling the order of events.

More than one-half of the 4th Grade teachers indicated that chronological order is important to see the interrelationship among events and two of them indicated that it is important to make cause-effect relationships. One of them rejected memorizing as a method, but stated the necessity of teaching chronological order.

Answering the question regarding the lecture contents and how they were orienting their students to think, both 7th and 4th Grade teachers indicated that they encourage the students to discuss issues within a cause-effect frame and to interrelate past incidents to the present. Besides, three teachers stressed the importance of question-answer technique as a thinking-based activity, with one of them adding answer-finding as well:

'I try to show and get them to notice the details which they may miss, generating some question marks in their minds. I always refrain from imposing my view. I lead them to find their own.' (PU4)

'Lecturing about the Hun State, I ask questions such as 'What would you do to ensure economic improvement in your country if you were the ruler?' (PU4)

As a response to whether they build up relations between the past incidents and the present time, all participating teachers gave affirmative answers. Some of them, however, did not give explanatory examples.

As a response to whether they present different viewpoints, most 7th Grade teachers gave affirmative answers but had difficulties giving concrete examples. The answers of three public school teachers were in the negative. They claimed that information obtained anywhere other than the textbooks confuse students.

'In fact, history books exaggerate our success and always find excuses for our failures. We pretend as if the incidents happened free from our will, or we were unjustly treated. However the students should also be shown other dimensions of the event.' (PU7)

Most 4th Grade teachers expressed that they do not point out different viewpoints. Only two of the teachers spoke in the affirmative:

'Yes, I asked a question about Adam and Eve. Some students claimed that we are their offspring. Some others argued in favor of Darwin's theory and the rest said that they were cloned by aliens. I never voice my opinion in such cases; I only point to the issues to be considered.' (PU4)

'I haven't recognized different comments. Since the students are too young, they are unable to interpret.' (PU4)

When asked about the evaluation of different eras and conditions, all but one stated that these events should be evaluated in accordance with past circumstances:

'The problem of today's children is that they see historical incidents as today's events. We should adapt them. When you mention the army, they think of today's tanks. When I say Timur's tanks were his elephants, they strain to comprehend. In fact, we should evaluate some of the events in accordance with present conditions. For instance, what happened on 12 September was a huge mistake' (PU7).

'The Independence Courts of the Turkish War of Independence were not democratic. But those days' circumstances required that. It was a fairly reasonable decision.' (PU7)

When asked whether they give inquiry assignments before class, all of the 7th and 4th Grade teachers gave affirmative answers. They explained that they ask students to read the content of the next class from the book and to collect encyclopedic data about the content. They also assign term papers, topics of which are identified during previous class meetings. For the willing students, teachers assign projects encouraging them to carry out a more in-depth examination of the subjects. With the exception of one teacher, all the others stated that they recommend different sources for the students to read, but none of them further explain how the students should make use of them. Only one teacher stated that he gives the students a bibliography list and spends a class hour explaining how to reach these sources.

'We don't give long term assignments. I ask my students to prepare a paper and bring it to class the next day. We applaud those who do the assignment. Those who haven't yet read the source go and do so after that.' (PU4)

'I give homework asking 'What would have happened, if this hadn't been so?'. Students write their answers and I ask them to read it aloud in the classroom.' (PU4)

While 4th Grade teachers did not give any explanation about the use of different sources, they stated that they help students do an inquiry assignment by recommending encyclopedias and other primary school level sources.

Discussion and conclusion

In conclusion it was found that the teachers expressed the main objective of history education as helping the students to build up a past-future interrelationship and learn lessons from the past. In order to reach this goal, the teachers use

textbooks and some similar publications (general-content books, encyclopedias, etc.) as their main sources. Other than these, it was observed that teachers mostly make the students memorize the content rather than comprehend it. We conclude that this is a result of referring to one source only. It is believed that using a single textbook in the lessons as the only source book plays an important role in preventing the students from developing multiple viewpoints, which they would be able to achieve through analyzing the interpretations in different source books.

Seixas (1998) underlined that historical thinking skills cannot be improved by the use of the textbook as the main source. This will prevent the students from seeing the interpretative nature of historical knowledge. Hynd (1999) states that only one book could not exhibit the contradicting information, hence the students should examine sources reflecting different viewpoints.

At the end of the study, no difference has been found between the classroom activities used by 4th and 7th Grade teachers. We can state, therefore, that students are not equipped with historical thinking skills during the 4th Grade courses where they face historical information for the first time. Likewise, these skills are still not utilized effectively in the 7th Grade courses either.

The techniques used by the teachers in lecturing history contents are: question-answer, teacher narration, student narration, taking notes, book reading, and underlining the books. However, the above-mentioned techniques do not improve the historical thinking skills of students. It is observed that these are used as a means of getting the students to memorize the information in the textbook. It can be gathered from the observations that the techniques, tools and materials the teachers use are quite limited and this is insufficient in developing students' thinking. Similar results were reached in an earlier nationwide research carried out in order to determine the techniques, tools and materials used in history lessons (Bozkurt, 2000; Dumludag, 2000). It would make a big contribution to the development of students' historical thinking skills, and enhance their knowledge as well, if historical places and museums could be used for history lessons where materializing words in the mind of the students may be difficult. In addition, the techniques of verbal history, group studies, discussions, and drama may be employed rather than narration and question-answers.

Regarding the skill of describing historically important events (Seixas, 1993) which is one of the three issues of historical thinking, most of the 7th Grade teachers stated that they emphasize these events by building a relation with the present, whereas the 4th Grade teachers said that they explained the importance of the event at the beginning of the lesson. However, the observations did not record any of the teachers exhibiting such activity. In such cases, students may have difficulty in comprehending the relevance of the subject to their own lives and the present day.

Teachers indicated that the history topics are not presented in a chronological order in the 7th Grade social studies book and that this confuses the students. Association of historical events with each other asserts the advanced stages of chronological thinking (Stow & Haydn, 2000). At the same time, the comparison of historical persons and cultures requires thinking about change, continuity, and progress. In order to perceive the historical process as a whole, the improvement stages of the civilizations should be considered comparatively and within the framework of their interrelations. However, it was seen during the observations that the teachers were not closely associating historical events with each other, which may be hindering students' chronological thinking.

The teachers also stressed that chronological order is especially important in helping the students to form cause-effect relationships as they perceive chronological order as a set of linear occurrences. In other words, they see the end of an event as the beginning of another. However, cause-effect relationships differ from chronological order. Liu (2000) states that, if B comes after A in an event, this will mean they may have a causality relationship between each other, but it will be wrong to think that A affected B only because B comes after A. Therefore, it can be deduced that these teachers have a linear understanding of history. In other words, it can be said that these teachers and their students think that the order of occurrence of the events form a cause-effect relationship and the cause of an event is the outcome of a previous one.

It was also determined that the teachers mostly use cause-effect relationship activities to improve students' thinking. What is important is that this relationship is built by the question-answer technique and the students get the answers from the book. Consequently, this activity also fails to surpass factual knowledge.

Although much research asserts that students develop different viewpoints and construct their own opinions by examining the often different—even conflicting—opinions in different sources (Doppen, 2000; Foster & Yeager, 1999; Voss, 1998; Stahl, Hynd & Britton, 1996; Wiley & Voss, 1996; Rouet, Britt, Mason & Perfetti, 1996; Cooper, 1992; Wineburg, 1991), the teachers in this study did not seem to be making a conscious effort to help students form different viewpoints. It was seen during the observations that the main source used in the classroom was the textbook, and the few other sources used in the classroom contained similar information. It can be said that the teachers' not emphasizing different viewpoints in the classroom is due to a lack of using additional sources written by historians with different viewpoints.

During the interviews, most of the teachers indicated that the events which occurred in different periods and under different conditions should be evaluated according to the circumstances of that period. When the acts of the people who lived in the past are examined as a whole with their thoughts, beliefs, and

viewpoints forming the basis of these acts, a certain change can be observed. In order to understand this change and analyze the historical events in a healthy manner, these acts should be evaluated within the framework of the circumstances of that specific period. However, it will not be enough to express this verbally in a class environment. While interpreting the past, historical empathy should be established. Dulberg (1998), in his experimental research on historical empathy, has discovered that the perception of the students about the people who lived in the past reflect qualitative variation through different ways. However, no activity towards establishing historical empathy was witnessed during the observations. It can be argued that this will prevent the students from making healthy evaluations of the significant acts that took place in the examined period as well as the prevailing structures of thinking.

When the teacher interviews and the classroom observations are taken into account, the research assignments given by the teachers cannot be regarded within the dimensions of historical thinking. The most important issue in developing the skill of historical research, which is the fourth historical thinking standard set by the NCHS (1996) writers, is that the students should act like historians and examine the primary and secondary sources, thus composing their own interpretations through questioning the different approaches presented in these sources. They should also form historical approaches by supporting their interpretations with different sources. However, in our situation, a compilation of the collected information is made using only the limited sources at hand.

All these results show that teachers do not execute an adequate number of activities for the improvement of historical thinking skills, neither in the 4th nor in the 7th Grade.

More research is needed into the development of students' historical thinking skills. The elementary education stage is of utmost importance as it is the starting point for developing these skills. Implementation programs aimed at these skills should be prepared and improved with the help of experimental research. Moreover, it was pointed out in this study that social studies programs were not structured in proper chronological order. For the purpose of developing historical thinking skills in students, history units should be revised taking these into consideration.

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