

Visual Materials in Social Studies Textbooks

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Abstract: Since the year 2005, textbooks in Turkey have been prepared using a restrictive system. The change in lesson plans have had an effect both on the class environment and on the change in textbooks. This change has reflected on the use of visual materials and the content of the textbooks. The visual materials in the previous textbooks were inadequate and nonfunctional. However, many kinds of enriched visual materials are used in the new textbooks. Also, these visual materials that are used in the new textbooks are more effective and functional. The use of visual materials during the lesson has a great effect on the success of the student. Because the textbooks are one of the most important materials that are used during lessons, the visual materials used should be analyzed and enhanced. The main goal of this thesis is to determine what the visual materials that are used in the Social Sciences 5th grade textbooks are and how they suffice. The elementary school 5th grade social studies textbooks which are published by the Board of Education and a certain publishing house has been analyzed by the use of document analization which is one of many qualitative research methods.

Key words: Social Studies • Textbook • Visual Material

INTRODUCTION

In Turkey, since the year 2004, lesson plans have been changed by the Board of Education. The general changes made are as follows [1]:

- The constructivist program has become predicate.
- Active learning and activity bases have been anticipated.
- A relation has been formed between the principal and intermediary disciplines.
- The relation between Elementary entirety and disciplines have been taken into consideration.
- Measuring and evaluating based on process has been highlighted.

While the earlier programs were based on manner, the new programs are constructive. As a result, the textbooks have been re-written and serve as the main reflection of the changes made in the programs. Change has been made especially on the content and the visual materials in the textbooks [2]. With this, Elementary Social Studies Lesson educational program has changed as well. The changes have also reflected on the textbooks used. Before we discuss the changes made in the textbooks, we will need to provide some basic information.

Textbooks are important in the learning-teaching process in that they provide the information that will be

learned by the students and taught by the teachers. Textbooks aim to actualize every goal of the educational elements. The characteristics that students need to be able to have a say in society are provided by the use of textbooks. Therefore, the work done on textbooks is of great importance. Teachers use many materials in the learning-teaching process. Materials are one of the main components that form the foundation of learning. Textbooks are materials that provide the information on the topic in a sequential and correct manner enabling the students to learn by themselves.

Teachers form the examinations, homeworks and strategies based on the textbooks which also supply teachers with new ideas. Textbooks are indispensable materials in learning-teaching environments. They carry great importance both as working material for students or the learning-teaching process [3].

In Turkey since the year 1995, when textbooks are being prepared, it is requested that elements such pictures, tables, graphics, cartoons, diagrams, plans, maps and etc be included. The texts to be quickly apprehendable, to be placed in the right places with explanations, for the print to be clear, aesthetic and comprehendable are elements that should be given importance to [4]. However, textbooks used before the year 2005 have shown to be nonfunctional and inadequate in terms of variety of visual materials.

Since the year 2005, the writers of textbooks have chosen the reconstructive approach and have changed not only the content of the textbooks but also the physical structure. These changes have been made in accordance to the critiques of the Board of Education [5]. As it is in all textbooks, the Elementary Social Studies 5th grade textbooks are written by a committee of writers and are prepared by a specific publishing house. The textbooks that have been prepared are first shown to the Board of Education, evaluated and if approved, earn the right to be used as teaching materials. The Board of Education evaluates the books based on the critiques that have been earlier determined. Textbooks are evaluated on three aspects: 1) Content 2) Visuality 3) Language and Spelling.

The biggest change that can be seen nowadays in textbooks is that while earlier there was only one textbook used, now there is a new program where textbooks are used in sets of 3. In each set there is a textbook, student workbook and teacher's book. Due to the change to constructive approach, there has also been an additional change in the way that the topics are given. But, aside from both changes that have been made to the Elementary Social Studies 5th grade textbooks, the visuality of the textbooks has completely changed.

As known, visual materials play an important role in enabling students to transform abstract knowledge to be concrete knowledge. It also assists students to reveal their thoughts, to use them and to determine new ways for them to process information [6].

In our country, what is mostly taken into consideration is the content of the textbooks. The evaluation of the visual materials in the textbooks have been greatly neglected. In the completed researches, it has been seen that the use of visual materials is inadequate in terms of visuality [7]. Unfortunately, the evaluation of textbooks in terms of visual materials has been greatly neglected. There is great complexity in graphical designs. Some of the complexities that can be seen especially in elementary textbooks are amateur pictures, unnecessary use of color, cramped writing and crowded page designs.

The graphic designers who evaluate the textbooks tend to focus a little on the content but more on the format of the textbooks and the educational scientists tend to focus on both points but not enough on the use of visual materials. However, the way the information is prepared and presented is as important as the message it gives. Nowadays, the use of visual knowledge has increased. Visual language has become as important as a specific language all itself and now this new language must be learned [8].

Consequently, pictures, photographs and other visual materials are going to continue to be indispensable elements of textbooks. However, the pictures in the textbooks which have been prepared earlier are simply there to serve the purpose of visually enriching the textbook; they have no important purpose of function. Nowadays, the visual materials in the social studies textbooks have increased in number and variety. To grab the attention of students, questions based on the visuals in the textbooks are given.

In the earlier Elementary Social Studies 5th grade textbooks, there were very few photographs, pictures and maps. However, in the new books there are many more visual materials. The variety of these visual materials draws attention. Also, the visual that can be seen in the earlier books are simply there to fill up space or simply for the sake of visuality. However, the visual that take place in the new textbooks are there to enable students to transfer abstract knowledge to concrete knowledge, to help them better understand the topic and to increase their motivation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this thesis, in order to collect information on the social studies 5th grade textbooks and student workbooks, documents on the use of visuals have been analyzed. Document analysis is one of the qualitative research methods. This method includes the analysis of written materials giving facts on aimed topic [9].

When using the document analysis method, first the information that has been obtained from the document analysis should be encoded and later the encoded documents should be brought together to obtain from them the required results [10]. When the analysis was being carried out, the Elementary Social Studies 5th grade textbooks prepared by the Board of Education and the Elementary Social Studies 5th grade textbooks prepared by a specific publishing house were at first reviewed. Later, as an addition to both textbooks, the student workbooks were taken into hand.

Textbooks are written by a special writers committee who works in relation to the Board of Education. The prepared textbooks are evaluated by the Board of Education and if adequate, are given the right to be used in education. The Board of Education evaluates the books based on the critiques that have been earlier determined. Textbooks are evaluated on three aspects (1. Content 2. Visuality 3. Language and Spelling). Consequently, due to the topic of our thesis, the document analysis applied to the Social Studies 5th grade textbooks have been applied in accordance to the visual elements of the textbooks.

Table 1: Textbook Size and Number of Forms

TEXTBOOK		STUDENT WORKBOOK		TEACHER'S BOOK	
Textbook Size	Number of Forms	Textbook Size	Number of Forms	Textbook Size	Number of Forms
19,5 x 27,5	11-14	19,5 x 27,5	7-9	Free	Free

Table 2: Elementary Social Studies 5th grade textbook units, Mathesis numbers, Percentage and Time span

Field of Learning	Units	Number of Wins	Percentage (%)	Teaching Periods
Individuals and Society	I am learning my rights	4	11	12
Culture and Inheritance	Step by step Turkey	6	14	15
People, Places, Surroundings	Let's learn about our region	8	14	15
Production, Distribution, Consumption	What we produce	7	14	15
Science, Technology and Society	Dreams that come true	6	11	12
Groups, Associations and Social Organizations	People who work for society	5	11	12
Strength, Management, Society	One country one flag	5	14	15
Global Communication	Everyone's world	6	11	12
Total		47	100	108

Table 3: The Distribution of the Visual Vaterials in the Textbooks Prepared By the Board of Education

Visual Materials	Poster	Photograph	Graph	Map	Cartoons	Stamp	Picture	Shape	Document	Clipart	Emblem
Amount in Book	7	433	9	4	3	3	57	16	7	1	19

Textbooks are composed of textbooks, student workbooks and teachers books. Being so, student workbooks have been included in the thesis.

In this research in order to obtain data, elementary social studies 5th grade one textbook prepared by the Board of Education and one by a specific publishing house has been used. The visual materials in the textbooks were counted one by one and later categorized. The varieties of visual materials in the textbooks and student workbooks are photographs, posters, maps, cartoons, stamps, pictures, shapes, documents, clipart and emblems. Because the number of visual elements in a textbook is dependant on the size and the number of pages of the textbooks, the size and capacity of textbook must be taken into consideration.

In the program that the Board of Education has published (Table 1) the number of forms in the Social Studies 5th grade textbooks have been determined as 11-14. Because a single forma consists of 16 pages, the elementary social studies 5th grade textbooks must consist of at least 192 and at most 224 pages. The student workbooks, however, consist of 7-9 formas and therefore must be at least 112 and at most 144 pages. When writing textbooks, these measurements must be taken into consideration because when writing teachers' books, the writers can write as many pages and include as many documents as they'd like aiming to assist teachers [11].

In table 2, the units and mathesis numbers of the elementary social studies 5th grade textbooks is shown. Also shown is the percentage covered in the units and in accordance to the percentage, the time necessary for each lesson to be carried out [11].

Findings and Comments

Findings Related to the Textbook: The elementary social studies 5th grade textbooks that are prepared by a writing committee working in relation to the Board of Education and are still being taught in our schools today, consist of 213 pages [12]. The textbooks that have been prepared by a publishing house and that are being taught in schools today consist of 202 pages. First we will discuss the findings on the textbooks that have been prepared by the Board of Education.

As seen in table 3, photographs are the visual materials that are mostly used in this textbook. The visual material that is used the least is clipart. In addition to this, 11 kinds of visual materials and a total of 559 visual materials were used. This brings forth how much the textbooks have changed in terms of visuality. Here we need to make a special explanation about the shapes. A large number of the shapes used in the textbooks and listed in the table as shapes are maps that do not have a scale or a legend. Because a map without a scale or a

Table 4: The Distribution of Visual Materials in Textbooks Prepared by a Specific Publishing House

Visual Materials	Poster	Photograph	Graph	Map	Cartoons	Stamp	Picture	Shape	Document	Clipart	Emblem
Amount in Book	2	232	1	6	8	-	11	4	12	44	9

Table 5: The Distribution of the Visual Materials in the Workbooks Prepared by the Board of Education

Visual Material	Poster	Photograph	Graph	Map	Cartoons	Picture	Shape	Clipart	Emblem
Amount in Book	1	91	10	3	10	38	38	44	10

Table 6: The Distribution of the Visual Materials in the Workbooks Prepared by a Specific Publishing House

Visual Material	Poster	Photograph	Graph	Map	Cartoons	Picture	Shape	Clipart	Emblem
Amount in Book	-	12	4	3	-	2	36	-	-

legend cannot be named as a map, it has to be shown under shapes. This shows that there is a major deficiency and error in the use of maps in textbooks.

As seen in table 4, the visual materials used most are photographs with a number of 232 [13]. The visual materials that are least used are graphics. While stamps were in the other textbook, we see that there are no stamps in this textbook. In this textbook a total of 327 visual materials were used. As a result, we can say that the textbooks prepared by the Board of Education have more visual materials than the others.

In terms of quantity, in both textbooks there are many more visual materials than there are in textbooks that were prepared before the year 2005. In the previous textbooks, the very little amount of visual materials are only there for visuality. Opposingly, the visual materials used in this textbook serve a purpose and great importance. From this we conclude that new textbooks give more importance to visual materials.

Findings on the Student Workbooks: The student workbooks that have been prepared by a publishing house and that are being taught in schools today consist of 198 pages. The student workbooks that have been prepared by a publishing house and that are being taught in schools today consist of 100 pages.

There are a total of 9 visuals used in students workbooks: posters, maps, cartoons, pictures, shapes, clipart, graphs and emblems. They are different from textbooks being that there are no graphs and emblems.

As seen in table 5, there are a total of 245 visual materials used, 91 of them being photographs [14]. The visual materials that are least used are posters. But visual materials such as documents and stamps that can be seen in textbooks cannot be seen in student workbooks.

As seen in table 6, the visual materials used most in these workbooks are shapes [15]. The visual materials

used least are pictures. There is a total of 57 visuals used. However, visual materials such as clipart, cartoons, posters and emblems that can be found in the other student workbooks cannot be found in this student workbook. It is normal for the use of visual materials in students' workbooks to be less than those in textbooks because workbooks are books that students more often than not work, draw and write in. Therefore, there needs to be space for the students to be able to use. This book also has less pages than the other. This results in a low amount of visual materials used because the number of pages is parallel to the amount of visual materials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The constructive approach that has been carried out since 2005 has had an effect both on lesson programs and on textbooks. The change that has taken place in textbooks has been especially on the content and visuality of the textbooks. Textbooks have been prepared as a set of 3: textbooks, students' workbooks and teachers' books. This change is one of the biggest changes that has taken place in our country in the last few years.

In textbooks and in student workbooks a wide variety and many different visual materials have been used. These visual materials are there to enhance learning as opposed to only serving the purpose of filling space or for visuality. Textbooks, especially, have been enhanced in quality to become more enticing for students.

The subject which has gotten the most out of the change in textbooks is social studies. Due to the structure of the lesson, it needs more visual materials. There is a lot weighing on the use of visual materials in textbooks. Sometimes they are used as motivation in the beginning of a lesson and other time they are used to conceive the lesson.

Sometimes the visual materials chosen to make the lesson more concrete are selected randomly. Sometimes to conceive the lesson, an extreme use of visual materials takes place which prevents students from easily understanding the topic at hand.

We can suggest the following based on that results at hand:

The visual materials in textbooks should be protected and should have carry great importance.

Visual materials provide students with awareness. With proper use of visual materials, it can assist students' development in many positive ways. Also, besides providing visual materials in textbooks, teachers need to be educated more properly in how to make better use of these materials.

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