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Examination of the Cognitive Level of Questions in Social Studies Textbooks and the Views of Teachers Based on Bloom Taxonomy*

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Abstract
It can be argued that very important changes have been made to textbooks which were rearranged according to the theory of constructivism during the 2004-2005 academic year. The aim of this change was to enable students to acquire high-order cognitive skills. In this study, by using Bloom taxonomy, the pre-reading and reflection (assessment) questions in Social Studies textbooks which have a significant place in education programs were examined to discover the extent to which they give rise to high-order cognitive domain skills. The sample of the research consisted of Social Studies teachers working in the central district of the province of Konya as well as the textbooks which the Ministry of Education requires for use in the 6th and 7th grades. When this study is considered as a whole, it can be seen that there are two stages. Each stage is initially assessed within itself and then compared to the other stage. The holistic multiple case study design was used. In each stage of this study, however, for consideration of the views of teachers and the stages of document analysis, the holistic single design was used. Descriptive analysis was applied to all findings to interpret the collected data. After the relevant literature was reviewed, similar results from studies on this subject were assessed to increase the validity and reliability of this study. In addition, various data was collected through textbooks and focus-group interviews with teachers. Data from examination of the documents was categorized according to question types and their cognitive levels according to Bloom taxonomy via content analysis percentage distributions. The aim of this study was to find out whether high-order cognitive domain skills were reflected in the pre-reading and assessment questions in Social Studies textbooks, and if so, to what extent. Therefore, typical case sampling, one of the purposeful sampling techniques, was utilized. Descriptive analysis was used to interpret the data from the document analysis findings and focus-group interview data. After all the findings were assessed, the 6th grade prep questions were found to be at a low level (84.2%), open-ended assessment questions were at a high level (70.2%), and the multiple-choice assessment questions were at a low level (85%). The 7th grade prep questions were low level at 71.3%, open-ended assessment questions were high level at 66.6%, and 93.05% of multiple-choice questions were low-level questions. When these findings were presented to the Social Studies teachers, they all agreed that the level of the prep questions was lower in general than the cognitive levels of the students. According to the views of teachers regarding this assessment, there were more high-order thinking-level questions which include the levels of analysis, synthesis and assessment when compared to textbooks used from previous years. However, they are still inadequate. According to the results of the study, questions were not distributed in a balanced way in accordance with Bloom taxonomy because there were more low level questions than high level questions.

Keywords: Textbooks • Teachers' views • Social studies • Preparatory questions and assessment questions • Bloom taxonomy

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According to the theory of constructivism, a person's knowledge is their own because knowledge is constructed through interpretation rather than exploration. For this reason knowledge is subjective. In other words, it is justified that no knowledge is unrelated from the learner but constructed during learning. Therefore, it is focused on the learner. How students learn rather than what they learn is important. According to the theory of constructivism, gaining the basic skills of learning experientially, such as problem solving and decision making is the aim for students (Demirel, 2009). To achieve these goals, different methods, techniques, and strategies are used during the teaching-learning process, and an appropriate tool is chosen according to the new techniques (Önal & Kaya, 2006). Textbooks are certainly the most used tool in this sense. The topics in textbooks should foster student participation in class. In this way, knowledge obtained by children can become permanent (Küçükahmet, 2003).

Nowadays, it is possible to find many descriptions of Social Studies in the literature. One of the most comprehensive descriptions was made by the Ministry of National Education (MNE):

> "Social Studies classes are primary education classes with the purpose of helping the individual to realize his/her public existence. These classes consist of social sciences like history, geography, economics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, political science and law. Social Studies includes a combination of learning areas that involve the topic of citizenship, reviewing the interaction of humans with their social and physical environment, and is achieved through the idea of public education." (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MNE], 2006a, p. 45).

In Social Studies classes, a person has the opportunity to learn about social environments near and far, as well as the past, current, and the direction of the future. Social Studies classes have a very important role in the creation and development of a child's social personality (Can, Yaşar, & Sözer, 1998; Tarman & Acun, 2010). To say this another way, Social Studies gives the necessary information and skills to children for helping them solve real-life problems effectively, for making decisions that will ease their lives, and for implementing those decisions into their lives (Özmen, 2011; Tarman & Acun, 2010).

As Öztürk (2006) specified, the subject of Social Studies plays a serious role in education. Education provides an opportunity to transfer knowledge from the past to the future, enabling people to keep up with the ever developing and changing world. It also helps them improve their cultural characteristics and speed up their economic development (Çetin, 2008). Various types of tools are needed to provide education efficiently and too expedite the process of learning to reach targeted behaviors. Educational tools are highly useful in reducing the time and cost of education while increasing the permanency of knowledge gained (Tarman, 2012; Ulukalın, 2007). In addition, educational tools are used by students for efficient learning and by teachers for efficient teaching, which in turn makes the teaching-learning process more efficient (Ercan, Kayabası, & Tertemiz, 2004; Mishra, 2014). To attain the objectives of education, textbooks are the most used tool for shaping the teaching and learning process (Kılıç & Seven, 2002). The MNE describes textbooks as "manuscripts to be used for teaching purposes in all types and degrees of education and covering the contents identified in the curriculum" (MNE, 1995). In Turkey, textbooks are thought to be the main source of information, and students use them the most while studying at home or at school (Ercan et al., 2004; Kaya, 2002; Tarman & Ayas, 2011).

Research findings have shown that textbooks play a significant role in classrooms, and teachers use textbooks as the most dominant source of their teaching activities (Abaya, 1993; Armento, 1986; Cassidy & Bognar, 1992; Chen, 1997; Rawadieh, 1998; Shaver, Davis, & Helburn, 1979; Tarman & Ayas, 2011). Textbooks are utilized more often than any other curricular material. However, there is a longstanding criticism about the insufficiency of textbooks as a major source of curricular material in instructional practice (Tarman & Ayas, 2011). With regard to content and methodology, social studies textbooks are monotonous and dull; they neither emphasize map or global skills, nor do they involve sufficient higher-order thinking skills (Beck & McKeown, 1991; Fitzgerald, 1979; Miller, 2007).

Textbooks are defined as technical manuscripts prepared in accordance with teaching programs to provide knowledge tailored to the cognitive level of students, presenting content from easy to hard and offering an opportunity for the learner to develop systematically (Demirel & Kıroğlu, 2005; Güneş, 2002). Textbooks have a significant effect on what students learn and what teachers teach; they attract student interest and help them relate with topics (Küçükahmet, 2003; Tarman & Ayas, 2011). Textbooks include prep questions to stimulate the study, research and thinking skills of students (Demirel, 2000). During the 2004-2005 academic year, most educational programs were renewed according the constructivist approach whereby all textbooks were re-written based

on these newly developed programs (Durukan, 2009). Similarly, textbooks, student workbooks and teacher guide books for Social Studies were also prepared by the MNE.

According to the analysis and evaluation of *Tebliğler Dergisi* (Official Bulletin of the MNE) published in 2006, the preparation of textbooks, either by the MNE or private sector, should involve field specialists, editors, linguists, visual designers, measurement/evaluation specialists, educational psychologists, and consider the following points:

a) Content

b) Language, Expression and Wording

c) Learning and Teaching

d) Design and Layout

For the evolution of textbooks, in the present study these basic premises with a specific attention to prep and assessment questions were considered. During the teaching and learning process, it's important for a textbook to have the necessary and sufficient qualifications (Göçer, 2007). The main components of textbooks in terms of learning, teaching and measurement/evaluation are listed in *Tebliğler Dergisi* (MoNE, 2006b) as follows:

i. Topics are presented in a way that lead students to reason, to use independent and creative thought, comparing and making inferences.

ii. Preparatory works encourage the thinking and research skills of students.

iii. It is intended for children to construct knowledge in their minds, not to memorize it.

iv. Learning methods and strategies are considered and high-level (metacognitive) thinking skills are improved.

v. Topics are arranged for students to gain the basic skills and sub-skills of the program, and they are taught in a way to stimulate student participation.

vi. Evaluation and assessment principles and techniques are to be considered.

vii. After every unit/chapter, assessment questions that measure if a student has gained the related knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and qualifications are to be included.

viii. Summative evaluation techniques, such as multiple choice, true-false, fill-in-the-blanks, pairing, and written examination, as well as formative evaluation techniques such as portfolio, performance, and observation are to be included.

As mentioned in the directive, the prepared books should be based on the development of higher-order (metacognitive) thinking skills. Up until now, there have been many classifications proposed related to the cognitive area (Sönmez, 2004; Yüksel, 2007). However, both domestically and abroad, the classification known as "Bloom Taxonomy" has been most widely accepted. Prepared in 1956 by Bloom, cognitive area behaviors consist of cognitive abilities, skills and information (Bloom, 1956). Mental weight is observed with behavior. The targets and behaviors in this classification are formed from simple to more complex, easy to more difficult, abstract to concrete, and a prerequisite to each other reflectively (Öztürk & Dilek, 2004). Bloom and his friends focused on easier ways of understanding especially when performing complex processes of learning. This taxonomy can not only be used with the six mental-activity levels of learning, but also can be used to determine the question types related to these six mental levels. It is possible to think about the knowledge, understanding and application levels, which are the first three areas of the cognitive field, as the lower level, and thought analysis, synthesis and evaluation steps, the last three areas of the cognitive field, as the higher level (Erginer, 2006). In Turkey, there are questions at the beginning, middle and end of each unit of the textbooks to evaluate the level of students. According to the constructivist approach, the questions must be designed to push students to think so that the students have the desire to gain knowledge and skills (Şenses, 2008). The purpose of this study is to examine the cognitive levels of the prep and assessment questions in the Social Studies textbooks by using Bloom Taxonomy.

Method

Research Design

The sample of the research includes Social Studies teachers working in the Central District of the Konya Province and the textbooks prepared by the MNE for the 7th and 6th grades. The titles of the books examined in the present study are:

Genç, E., Polat, M. M., Başol, S., Kaya, N., Azer, H., & Gökçe, S. M. … Özcan, A. (2007). *İlköğretim sosyal bilgiler 6 ders kitabı*. İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları (6th grade Social Studies textbook).

Kaya, N., Polat, M. M., Koyuncu, M., & Özcan, A. (2008). *İlköğretim sosyal bilgiler 7 ders kitabı*. İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları (7th grade Social Studies textbook).

The research examined textbooks and written materials that contained information about the targeted events, using case analysis and qualitative research methods for the document review process. The sample technique in document review verifies and refutes the samplings. Thus, case studies and events are discovered and already completed studies are improved and evaluated as a means to improve the validity of the evidence. After the document review, focus group meetings were arranged with the Social Studies teachers. The teachers expressed themselves according to their evidence.

The Pattern of the Research

If the whole research is examined, we find the review had two steps: textbook review followed by teacher opinions. The holistic multiple-case study design was used for comparison while evaluating and then these steps were compared. All evidence was documented as described. For each step, however, the holistic single-case study design was used.

Data Collection and Analysis

Document survey data was gathered in the form of percentage distributions using unit content analysis from the findings and teacher opinions about these topics. To better understand the teachers, focus group meetings were held with data sampling. Not only the textbooks but also the opinions of the teachers were investigated and data verification was obtained. After data analysis, the opinions of the experts in related fields were taken and all similar results from the literature were reviewed and evaluated, to ensured the validity and reliability of the study.

For the analysis of the questions, Bloom Taxonomy was used. In this taxonomy, there are 6 sub-domains: knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Findings and Results

The collected data are presented as frequencies and percentages (see Tables 1-6). For percentage calculations, the distributions within each unit were evaluated. The average of those percentages was reflected in the findings and analyses of the study. The questions in the introduction part of each unit included only open-ended questions. However, the assessment questions at the end of each unit included fill-in-the-blanks, short answer, match, true-false, open-ended, and multiple-choice questions. For true-false questions, students answer questions based on the knowledge provided in the unit (Haladyna, 1997). These types of questions measure the recognition successfully, the understanding averagely, the judging little, but they do not measure application at all (Başaran, 1991). In questions involving sentences with missing words, the students are required to complete the sentence or fill in the blanks with one or two words. Similarly, these types of questions measure recognition successfully, understanding averagely,

Table 1
Levels of Open-Ended Prep Questions - 6th Grade

LEVEL		f	%	TOTAL %	TOTAL LEVEL %	
KNOWLEDGE	Specific factors	5	11.1	17.7		
	Ways and means of dealing with specific factors	3	6.6			
	Fields of Universal Abstraction	0	0			
COMPREHENSION	Translation	2	4.4	64.3		
	Extrapolation	12	26.6			
	Interpretation	15	33.3			
APPLICATION		1	2.2	2.2	**84.2**	**LOW LEVEL**
ANALYSIS	Analysis of elements	0	0	13.3		
	Analysis of relationships	6	13.3			
	Analysis of organizational principles	0	0			
SYNTHESIS	Production of a unique communication	0	0	2.2		
	Production of a plan, or proposed set of operations	1	2.2			
	Derivation of a set of abstract relations	0	0			
EVALUATION	Judgments in terms of internal evidence	0	0	0		
	Judgments in terms of external criteria	0	0		**15.5**	**HIGH LEVEL**

(The total is a little less than %100 due to the round off caused by the analysis software).

judging little, but do not measure application at all. If they are used too frequently, it directs students towards memorization (Başaran, 1991). Multiple-choice questions consist of questions with multiple answers (Haladyna, 1997). With multiple-choice questions, learning in all levels of Blooms taxonomy can be measured. There are multiple-choice questions in all assessment-question sections in each unit. In the present study, true-false, fill-in-the-blanks, short-answer questions and matching questions were considered as low-level questions based on Blooms taxonomy, and thus only open-ended and multiple-choice questions were analyzed.

As seen in Table 1, for the introduction, 17.7% of the questions were at the level of knowledge, 64.3% at the level of understanding, 2.2% at the level of application, 13.3% at the analytical level, and 2.2% at the level of synthesis. 84.2% were at the lower cognitive level, which includes knowledge, understanding and application, while 15.5% were at the higher cognitive level, which includes analysis and synthesis. No questions were found at the level of evaluation.

According to the findings from Ocak and Yurtseven's (2009) study, with open-ended questions in the introductions as well as thought provoking questions at the beginning of the subsections in each unit, the existing knowledge of students can be discovered and then their schemas related with that topic can be stimulated. Therefore, knowledge-level questions may be included in the pre-reading section of questions for stimulating the existing knowledge of students.

Based on the data presented in Table 2 regarding the end-of-unit questions, 5.8% of the questions were at the level of knowledge, 23.3% at the level of understanding, 29.2% at the level of analysis, and 41% at the level of synthesis. 29.1% of the questions were at the lower cognitive level, which includes knowledge and understanding, and 70.2% of them

Table 2
Levels of Open Ended Assessment Questions - 6th Grade

	LEVEL	f	%	TOTAL %	TOTAL LEVEL %	
KNOWLEDGE	Specific factors	0	0	5.8		
	Ways and means of dealing with specific factors	1	5.8			
	Fields of Universal Abstraction	0	0			
COMPREHENSION	Translation	1	5.8	23.3		
	Extrapolation	2	11.7			
	Interpretation	1	5.8			
APPLICATION		0	0	0	**29.1**	**LOW LEVEL**
ANALYSIS	Analysis of elements	3	17.6	29.2		
	Analysis of relationships	1	5.8			
	Analysis of organizational principles	1	5.8			
SYNTHESIS	Production of a unique communication	1	5.8	41		
	Production of a plan, or proposed set of operations	5	29.4			
	Derivation of a set of abstract relations	1	5.8			
EVALUATION	Judgments in terms of internal evidence	0	0	0		
	Judgments in terms of external criteria	0	0		**70.2**	**HIGH LEVEL**

Table 3
Levels of Open Ended Multiple Choice Questions - 6th Grade

	LEVEL	f	%	TOTAL %	TOTAL LEVEL %	
KNOWLEDGE	Specific factors	11	32.3	44		
	Ways and means of dealing with specific factors	1	2.9			
	Fields of Universal Abstraction	3	8.8			
COMPREHENSION	Translation	3	8.8	41		
	Extrapolation	2	5.8			
	Interpretation	9	26.4			
APPLICATION		0	0	0	**85**	**LOW LEVEL**
ANALYSIS	Analysis of elements	2	5.8	14.6		
	Analysis of relationships	3	8.8			
	Analysis of organizational principles	0	0			
SYNTHESIS	Production of a unique communication	0	0	0		
	Production of a plan, or proposed set of operations	0	0			
	Derivation of a set of abstract relations	0	0			
EVALUATION	Judgments in terms of internal evidence	0	0	0		
	Judgments in terms of external criteria	0	0		**14.6**	**HIGH LEVEL**

were at the higher cognitive level, which includes analysis and synthesis. No questions were found for the levels of evaluation and application. However, when compared to the pre-reading questions, there were more questions at the higher cognitive level.

Table 3 shows that, regarding the assessment questions, 44% were at the level of knowledge, 41% at the level of understanding, 14.6% at the analytical level, and 41% at the level of synthesis. 85% of the questions were at the lower cognitive level, which includes knowledge and understanding, and 14.6% at the higher cognitive level, which includes analysis. No questions for the levels of application, synthesis, or evaluation were found. Compared to open-ended assessment questions, there were more questions at the lower cognitive level.

Table 4 shows that regarding the prep questions, 5.7% were at the level of knowledge, 59.9% at the level of understanding, 5.7% at the level of application, 14.2% at the analytical level, 11.3% at the level of synthesis, and 2.8% at the level of evaluation. 71.3% of the questions were at the lower cognitive level, which includes knowledge, understanding, and application. 28.3% of the questions were at the higher cognitive level, which includes analysis, synthesis and evaluation. It is remarkable that there were questions in every level although the percentages differed. Questions about topics stimulate a student's curiosity regarding that subject and thus increase their motivation which positively affects learning (Yurdakul, 2004). More open-ended questions should be given to increase student inquiry and thereby yield higher application.

Table 4
Levels of the Prep Questions - 7th Grade

	LEVEL	f	%	TOTAL %	TOTAL LEVEL %	
KNOWLEDGE	Specific factors	2	5.7	5.7		
	Ways and means of dealing with specific factors	0	0			
	Fields of Universal Abstraction	0	0			
COMPREHENSION	Translation	8	22.8	59.9		
	Extrapolation	4	11.4			
	Interpretation	9	25.7			
APPLICATION		2	5.7	5.7	**71.3**	**LOW LEVEL**
ANALYSIS	Analysis of elements	0	0	14.2		
	Analysis of relationships	5	14.2			
	Analysis of organizational principles	0	0			
SYNTHESIS	Production of a unique communication			11.3		
	Production of a plan, or proposed set of operations	1	2.8			
	Derivation of a set of abstract relations	3	8.5			
		0	0			
EVALUATION	Judgments in terms of internal evidence	0	0	2.8		
	Judgments in terms of external criteria	1	2.8		**28.3**	**HIGH LEVEL**

Table 5
Levels of the Assessment Questions - 7th Grade

	LEVEL	f	%	TOTAL %	TOTAL LEVEL %	
KNOWLEDGE	Specific factors	0	0	6.6		
	Ways and means of dealing with specific factors	1	6.6			
	Fields of Universal Abstraction	0	0			
COMPREHENSION	Translation	1	6.6	19.8		
	Extrapolation	1	6.6			
	Interpretation	1	6.6			
APPLICATION		1	6.6	6.6	**33.3**	**LOW LEVEL**
ANALYSIS	Analysis of elements	3	20	33.3		
	Analysis of relationships	2	13.3			
	Analysis of organizational principles	0	0			
SYNTHESIS	Production of a unique communication			33.3		
	Production of a plan, or proposed set of operations	3	20			
	Derivation of a set of abstract relations	0	13.3			
		2	0			
EVALUATION	Judgments in terms of internal evidence	0	0	0		
	Judgments in terms of external criteria	0	0		**66.6**	**HIGH LEVEL**

Table 5 indicates that regarding the end-of-unit questions, 6.6% were at the level of knowledge, 19.8% at the level of understanding, 6.6% at the level application, 33.3% at the analytical level, and 33.3% at the level of synthesis. 33.3% were at the lower cognitive level which includes knowledge, understanding, and application, and 66.6% were at

the higher cognitive level which includes analysis and synthesis. No questions were found at the evaluation level. Compared to the prep questions, there were a higher number of cognitive level questions.

Table 6
The Levels of Multiple Choice Assessment Questions - 7th Grade

LEVEL		f	%	TOTAL %	TOTAL LEVEL %	
KNOWLEDGE	Specific factors Ways and means of dealing with specific factors Fields of Universal Abstraction	8 0 0	16.6 0 0	16.6		
COMPREHENSION	Translation Extrapolation Interpretation	2 5 30	4.1 10.1 62.25	76.45		
APPLICATION		0	0	0	**93.05**	**LOW LEVEL**
ANALYSIS	Analysis of elements Analysis of relationships Analysis of organizational principles	3 0 0	6.25 0 0	6.25		
SYNTHESIS	Production of a unique communication Production of a plan, or proposed set of operations Derivation of a set of abstract relations	0 0 0	0 0 0	0		
EVALUATION	Judgments in terms of internal evidence Judgments in terms of external criteria	0 0	0 0	0	**6.25**	**HIGH LEVEL**

Table 6 shows that regarding the end-of-unit assessment questions, 16.6% of the questions were at the level of knowledge, 76.45% at the level of understanding, and 6.25% at the level of analysis. 93.05% were at the lower cognitive level, knowledge and understanding inclusive, and 6.25% were at the higher cognitive level, which includes analysis. No questions about application, synthesis, or evaluation were found. Compared to the higher cognitive level questions, there were more lower cognitive level questions.

These findings show that teachers consider prep questions to be too simple for students, in that some questions are answered without any difficulty. In addition, teachers stated that by adding questions that use comparing, relating, and judging, students can reach a cognitive level of knowledge. Moreover, according to the teachers, prep questions can be developed in a way as to increase student inquiry. They also stated that there were questions that promoted brainstorming activities, but these were not sufficient in number. According to the teachers, previously published textbooks contained higher cognitive level questions. Some teachers claimed that multiple-choice questions could be asked in all cognitive levels, but others claimed that these should be limited to the level of knowledge. It was also claimed that multiple-choice questions were appropriate for all levels but were not reflected in the questions sufficiently. The teachers commented that by asking questions that use the same words as in the textbooks, students may be led to memorization and their level of learning would remain in the lower cognitive level of knowledge.

Although today the constructivist approach is used in education, it is practiced very little in measurement and evaluation (Mandacı, 2007), as verified by the present research. The findings showed that 66.41% of all questions were in the lower cognitive level (knowledge 16.6%, understanding 47.4%, and application 2.41%) and 33.36% of them were in the higher cognitive level (analysis 18.6% and 0.46% evaluation).

The purpose of the current educational system is not to provide knowledge directly, but to lead students to knowledge (Kaptan, 1999). This is attained by having students gain higher cognitive skills (Ayvacı & Türkdoğan, 2009). Therefore, the amount of upper cognitive-level questions should be increased. One of the most important elements missing in Social Studies textbooks is the measurement of knowledge, skills, and behaviors. These are the main objectives of education and they are not at the desired level or quality (Pınarbaşı, 2007; Safran, 2009). Textbook should not provide knowledge directly but should contain higher cognitive-level texts and tools for students to construct knowledge by themselves. Textbooks must act as a guide in the knowledge construction process (Ocak & Yurtseven, 2009; Şahin, 2003).

Conclusion and Recommendations

According to the literature, textbooks are used by teachers as absolute guides independent from the premises of the current curriculum; they are the most popular tool used in education. However, they are also the most criticized educational tool as well (Önal & Kaya, 2006).

In Social Studies education based on the constructivist learning theory, learning experiences must be laid out for students so they can construct knowledge by themselves. These learning processes must create a medium where students have the opportunity to search, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize the materials or subjects being learned (Grant, 1997; Jadallah, 2000 as cited in Ersoy & Kaya, 2009)

In this research, the prep and assessment questions were investigated according to Bloom Taxonomy, and it was observed that higher cognitive-level types of questions were not sufficiently present in Social Studies textbooks. One of the most remarkable results of this research was that very few if any questions were found in some cognitive levels (i.e. evaluation) in the textbooks. There should be questions for all cognitive levels as well as knowledge levels (Halis, 2002). There should be questions from all cognitive levels of Bloom Taxonomy in a balanced way. In the present study, however, no questions for the levels of application, synthesis or evaluation were observed in the prep questions of the 6th grade textbook. In the prep questions of the 7th grade textbook, questions were not equally distributed among levels and there were no questions for the levels of application, synthesis or evaluation. In line with the findings of the present research, Şenses (2008) also stated that the questions were not distributed in balance according to Bloom Taxonomy and the lower cognitive-level questions were seen more often than higher cognitive-level questions. In focus group meetings with the teachers, they stated that the cognitive levels of prep questions were far lower than the cognitive levels of students, and most students do not even bother to answer the questions. For the multiple-choice questions, it was stated that questions were distributed equally according to Bloom Taxonomy and for the open-ended questions, it was stated that these did not motivate the students towards inquiry or application. With higher cognitive-level questions, the thinking skills of students are improved and they are also motivated to inquire, which improves their creative-thinking skills. In the most creative period of children, textbooks must direct them to perform research themselves instead of giving direct answers (Argüden, 2003). In the preparation of the questions, cognitive levels must be considered. Learning is much more permanent when students encounter higher cognitive-level questions (Koray & Altunçekiç, 2002). Exercises are as important as the texts in textbooks and they should be treated likewise (Demirel & Kıroğlu, 2005; Öztürk & Otluoğlu, 2002). In textbooks prepared using the constructivist approach, there should be open-ended questions which help students solve problems, contexts to develop cooperation, and more real life examples; students should be directed to other resources and participate in assessment activities. Such textbooks enable active student participation in the learning process and lead them to take on more responsibilities in self-learning (Kılıç & Seven, 2002; Öcal & Yiğittir, 2007). As far as assessment questions, 70.2% of the open-ended questions from the 6th grade textbooks and 66.6% of the open-ended questions from the 7th grade textbooks were at the higher cognitive level. This is considered a positive outcome.

In the present research, only Social Studies textbooks which are approved by the MNE were examined. However, Social Studies textbooks published by the private sector should also be subjected to similar research. In this way, a wider perspective would become available to researchers.

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