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Aesthetic value teaching in social studies textbooks

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study is to evaluate how the aesthetic value is handled in social studies textbooks. In this study, document analysis was used. Firstly, the sections devoted to the teaching of aesthetic value in the social studies curriculum were examined. After the social studies, curriculum was reviewed it was found that only two of the textbooks (the 5th and 7th grades social studies textbooks) contained sections that taught aesthetic value. The findings of the research indicate that values education has a significant place in the social studies curriculum (2018), but the teaching of aesthetic value is very scarce in social studies textbooks. Aesthetic value is being taught by giving only examples of historical buildings or historical relicts. Aesthetic value has not presented in the context of creativity, beauty, thinking of beauty, meaning of beauty, creation of beauty or the emotional and intellectual basis of beauty.

Keywords: Aesthetic value, values education, social studies textbooks, social studies teaching.

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1. Introduction

Values education is a controversial issue in the Turkish education system, because there is no standard methodology that teachers follow in this area, and textbooks are considered to be insufficient in teaching this concept. The mission of the social studies course is to raise a good and effective citizen. In Turkey, one of the values that should be given to the students covered by the social studies lesson is aesthetic value.

2. Aesthetic value and concept of beautiful

Aesthetic value contains subheadings, such as beauty, the meaning of beauty, thinking of beauty and the emotional and intellectual basis of beauty (Geiger & Mengusoglu, 1985; Tunali, 1989; Yetisken, 1991). Aesthetic value education requires many sensual and metacognitive skills. According to Tunali (2004), our perception of aesthetics is based on our senses, such as sight, hearing and sniffing. According to Plato and Meskin (2013), aesthetic value is the value that considering an object, event or state of affairs pleasure or displeasure when appreciated or experienced aesthetically. Plato, Pythagoras, Geiger, Baumgarten and Kant emphasised the concept of 'beautiful' while addressing aesthetic value (Yetisken, 1991). The field of aesthetics consists of poetry and music pieces, painting and ornament, portraits, landscapes, structures, parks and dances (Geiger, 1928). According to Kostov (2013), beauty, or the beautiful, is a basic category of aesthetics and aesthetic education. Accordingly, no theoretical work on aesthetic education is complete unless it includes a definition of the category of beauty, or the beautiful.

3. Research questions

- What are the topics covered in the teaching of aesthetic value in the social studies curriculum?
- Is aesthetical value teaching sufficient in social studies textbooks?
- How can aesthetic value teaching be improved in social studies textbooks?

4. Method

In this study, document analysis from qualitative research methods was used. The documents were determined to be social studies curriculum (2018) and social studies textbooks. First, the social studies curriculum was analysed. In the social studies curriculum, the concepts of 'art', 'aesthetics' and 'values education' were scanned. Afterwards, textbooks on social studies, which should be examined, were determined (5th and 7th grade textbooks). Document analysis was done on the sections of aesthetic value teaching of the textbooks.

5. Findings and results

The findings of the research indicate that values education has a significant place in social studies curriculum (2018), but the teaching of aesthetic value is very scarce in social studies textbooks.

a. Aesthetic value in social studies curriculum

The teaching of aesthetic value is firstly mentioned in the curriculum of the social studies programme, in the objectives of the program (the second objective includes the teaching of aesthetic value). Secondly, in the social studies curriculum, 'aesthetics' is mentioned as a 'value' in the 'values education' section. Thirdly, aesthetic value education is given in the second learning area of the 5th grade social studies curriculum 'culture and heritage'. The area of learning of culture and heritage is mainly a learning area that includes history subjects. Fourthly, the aesthetic value education is in the second learning area of the 7th grade social studies curriculum 'culture and heritage'. Fifthly, teaching

of the aesthetic value is placed in the 7th grade social studies curriculum (2018) as the objective (Second learning field, fifth objective).

b. Aesthetic value education in social studies textbooks

The social studies course plays a supporting role in values education processes, and the importance of social studies textbooks in social studies teaching processes continues. Aesthetic value teaching can be achieved through aesthetic object and aesthetic subject. It is extremely important that the aesthetic object can attract the attention of the student in formal terms. General problems in social studies textbooks (5th and 7th) are: keeping aesthetic value in the background, lack of visuals to develop an aesthetic point of view, lack of questions to develop an aesthetic point of view, lack of detailed explanations to develop aesthetic point of view, attempting to teach aesthetic value only through images of architectural structures, lack of fictional texts that students can empathise with and no clear photos of historical remains.

5.1. 5th grade social studies textbook

The 5th grade social studies textbook describes the ancient civilisations in the ‘culture and heritage’ learning area. The visuals and questions that offer the aesthetic understanding of the civilisations are not shared. For examples, look at ‘The Hittites used gold, copper, silver and iron mines to make their lives easier’ (p. 36), and ‘Lydians are civilisation that invented money’ (p. 37).

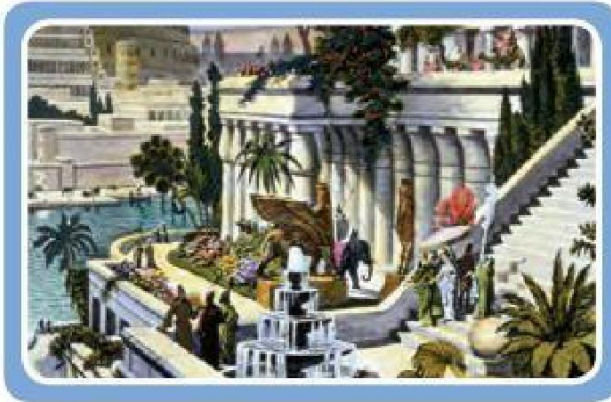


Sun disk belongs Hittites, p. 35



Coin belongs Lydians, p. 36

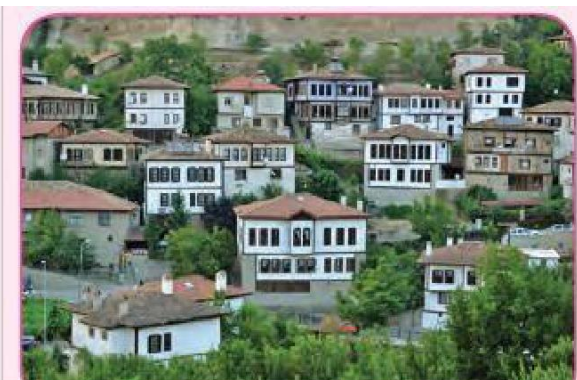
In the parts where the images are presented clearly, there is no explanation about the historical and artistic value of the objects in the visuals. However, in the pages in question, the meaning of the sun disk, the areas of use of the sun disk, the artistic meaning and value of the embroidery and the aesthetic beauty of this object could be explained. Likewise, the aesthetic value of the relief over the coins could be explained. Similar problems appear in other sample images shared in the 5th social studies textbook.



Hanging Gardens of Babylon by Maarten van Heemskerck, p. 39 Muradiye Waterfall, p. 44

There is no clear visual indication of The Hanging Gardens of Babylon. For this reason, it has become difficult to establish a connection between students and aesthetic objects. However, the table in question contains many aesthetic details. In the shared statement about the Muradiye Waterfall, flowers that bloom around the waterfall in the summer season were mentioned (Flowers blooming in summer add a different beauty to the waterfall, p. 44). However, there are no flowers in the image given. Therefore, aesthetic value teaching is extremely lacking and problematic in these parts.

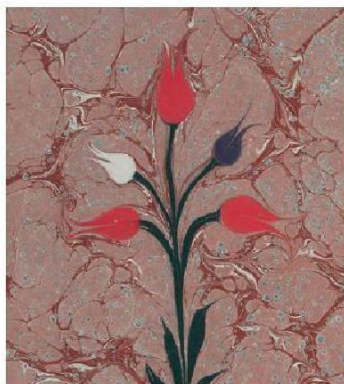
In the description of the image given about Safranbolu Houses, wooden carvings in the houses are mentioned, but the houses are seen in the distance (On the ceiling of Safranbolu Houses, the subtleties of wood carving are seen, p. 41). For this reason, students do not see wooden decorations. The red stones used in the construction of the Akdamar Church were reported to be beautiful but the image of the church was not given clearly (The red andesite stone used in the construction adds a different beauty to the church, p. 44). Such errors constitute obstacles to teaching aesthetic value. Similar problems are found in the examples of traditional Turkish carpets, marbling art, china samples, prophet sword, and sultan's tugra. Images are far from creating an aesthetic point of view and explanations are insufficient. In order to achieve the goals of aesthetic value teaching, students should be able to see the aesthetic value of the object fully and understand its artistic value. The above examples and explanations fall woefully short of such an approach.



Safranbolu Houses, p. 41 Akdamar Church, p. 44

5.2. . 7th Grade Social Studies Textbook

A target behaviour (proceeding learning outcomes) (7.2.5) included in 7th grade social studies curriculum covers direct aesthetic value teaching.



Art of Tile (China), p.89 Marbling Art, p.89

7.2.5.: ‘Give examples of Ottoman culture, art and aesthetics. Examples of travels from local and foreign travellers are included.’ In this section, it is seen that the subject is explained in the eyes of travellers. Just as in the 5th grade social studies textbook, photographs about architectural structures are also in the foreground.

There is no discussion about the aesthetic value of unique tile art. In this section, the aesthetic object can be used to explain the meaning of the preferred decorations, figures and colours. While the elaborate examples of the art of marbling were presented, the use of low resolution photographs was an obstacle in creating an aesthetic perspective. The meaning of flowers and colours preferred in the art of marbling has not been mentioned. The beauty of the artworks in question is not discussed. Therefore, it is very difficult for students to develop an aesthetic perspective in this way. In addition, the aesthetic understanding of the Ottoman Empire was exemplified in the sentences below. ‘Architectural works come to the fore in Ottoman art. The mosques, madrasahs, bridges, baths, and the imamshane that Ottoman architects made reflect the superior aesthetics of the era’, (p. 86), and ‘Manuel Serrano Sanz said the fountains and toilets are so magnificent that they resemble the palace’, (p. 86). Although such examples are positive, when the textbook is evaluated holistically, it does not give aesthetic value. Adherence to traditions and cultural heritage is emphasised in textbooks on social studies.

6. Discussion

Aesthetic value teaching is considered important because it develops areas, such as free thinking development, good and active citizenship, critical thinking, creativity, understanding of beauty and respect for differences. For this reason, the quality of social studies textbooks should be increased in terms of aesthetic value education. Some historical and literary texts can be used in teaching aesthetic value in social studies (Erdem & Dag, 2017; Kavruk & Sonmez, 2010; Kirbasioglu Kilic & Yaprakgul, 2018). According to Pekdogan (2017), it is difficult to understand how values develop in children, as values education is not given in a certain program in our country. In Canatan’s study (2004), in the hierarchy of values, the fact that the aesthetic value is in the last place is considered as negative. In their study which they published in the *Journal of the Values Education* between 2003 and 2014, Dundar and Hareket (2016) found that the most common studies were literature studies, followed by descriptive studies and then experimental studies. It is understood that experimental studies in the field of values education are extremely limited. However, in order to increase the quality of the values education, empirical studies aimed at implementation are in the extreme. In the same study, it is seen that aesthetic value education is not included among the frequently studied subjects. According to Topsakal (2004), one of the dimensions of European citizenship is the cultural dimension. The cultural dimension requires culture, art and aesthetic consciousness as well as respect among cultures. Evin and Kafadar (2004) stated that national values were given in social studies textbooks.

7. Recommendations for textbook writer

- The space allocated for teaching aesthetic value should be increased in the textbooks.
- Resolutions of the visuals in the textbooks should be increased.
- Questions about the aesthetic value of artworks or natural places should be included in the textbooks.
- Not only national values but also universal values and universal cultural heritage should be included in the textbooks.
- Textbooks should guide teachers about teaching aesthetic value.
- The explanations about the artworks and natural occurring exemplified in the textbooks should be focused on developing an 'aesthetic perspective'.
- A sufficient number of examples should be shared in the textbooks as much as the students can compare.
- Scales created for measuring aesthetic value perception should be included in the textbooks.
- Instructions should be provided to the students so that they can do deep research about the examples in the textbooks.

Recommendations for education authorities

- The lessons for pre-service teachers on art and aesthetics should be increased.
- Economic support should be provided to schools to visit museums, art galleries, and concerts, natural and historical riches. Procedures for visits should be reduced and bureaucratic obstacles should be removed.
- Teachers should participate in activities that will improve their understanding of art and aesthetics and encourage their students to participate in such activities.

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