AN ACTION RESEARCH ON EFFECTIVENESS OF MEASUREMENT AND ASSESSMENT DIMENSION OF 7TH GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

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The purpose of this study is to examine the problems encountered especially with measurement and assessment, during application of the 7th grade Social Studies Curriculum, to provide possible solutions, to implement these solutions and to evaluate the results. Action research method was conducted mainly in three phases; the first phase included defining the problem, the second phase included developing, implementing and monitoring an action plan, the third phase included determining teacher', pupils' and parents' opinions about the action plan and solutions proposed by them. The participants of the study consisted of a social studies teacher, thirty seventh grade students and their parents in Maltepe district of Istanbul. Semi-structured interviews and observations, open-ended questionnaire, informal observations and interviews were conducted to gather the data. Data was analyzed in conformity with descriptive data analysis. The general conclusions reached in the study can be summarized as follows: 1) There are many obstacles arising from the teacher, students, parents and educational system during the implementation of the measurement and assessment dimension of the social studies curriculum based on constructivist learning approach. Because of these obstacles, prescribed measurement and assessment activities can not be applied exactly as predicted. The teacher and most of the students and parents were willing to use alternative assessment approaches. 2) To resolve the current problems, an action plan including literature review with teacher, meetings with students and parents, constructivist activities and alternative assessment techniques were developed and applied. 3) It is understood that use of alternative assessment techniques increases students' ability of self-expression, sense of responsibility, active participation in class and understanding of topics. However, students perceived the use of some techniques as difficult. In addition to that, studying together with the teacher was a facilitator to develop teacher's knowledge and skills about alternative assessment. It also helped the teacher to apply the measurement and assessment dimension of the curriculum more

effectively. Besides, it is understood that meetings with parents should be organized more systematically and periodically.

Keywords: Social studies teaching, constructivist measurement and assessment, alternative assessment, action research.

Together with the recent developments education around the world, student-centered approaches to learning and teaching have been taking into account in more and more countries. In parallel with this development, in Turkey, primary curricula have been changed based on constructivist learning approach since 2005. As other student-centered approaches, constructivist learning approach stipulates active participation of students to whole learning process. Individual differences, interests, needs, and experience of students underpin all learning activities. Therefore, constructivist learning approach proposes the use of alternative assessment approaches such as performance tasks, portfolios, projects, self assessment tools, rubrics, etc.

In a constructivist curriculum, learning and assessment activities do not separate from each other. Therefore, assessment dimension of curriculum must differentiate from traditional one. Alternative assessment approaches require new roles and duties for students and teachers as well as parents. Especially, this process proposes active participation of students and parents in assessment process. This approach is a new challenge for Turkish students, teachers and parents. In related literature, while many advantages of alternative assessment have been highlighted, some research has noted that there are many problems during the application process of these techniques. In this context, while much is known about the views of teacher, students or parents towards alternative assessment approach, little is known about what actually happens in applying these techniques and how encountered problems can be solved. Taking into account the theoretical gap in the literature, the purpose of this study is to examine the problems encountered especially about measurement and assessment, during application of the 7th grade Social Studies Curriculum developed based on constructivist learning approach, to propose possible solutions, to implement these solutions and to evaluate the results. In this regard, the research questions of this study are three-fold: 1) What are the teacher, students and parents' current views and applications about assessment?, 2) What kinds of solutions can be offered to solve the encountered problems during the application?, 3) What are the teacher, students and parents' views about assessment after the intervention?

Literature Review

The most tangible effects of epistemological transformations in the social sciences can be seen in the field of education. Yildirim and Şimşek (2006) claim that these transformations developing from objectivist approach to subjectivist one are a part of the great transformation experienced in "How we understand and see the world" beyond being a temporary trend or fashion. In education, the reflections of these transformations can be seen in educational philosophies and learning theories. In this context, constructivism which has a new perspective to learning has emerged as a learning theory with reference to an epistemological assumption and from there transferred to the application (Fer & Cirik, 2007). When considered in

terms of how the knowledge comprises of and how it is obtained, it can be described as an extension of the interpretative philosophy.

Constructivism in education reflects a paradigm change from behavioral approach to cognitive education approach (Gagnon & Collay, 2005). According to this approach, learning is a process of constructing the meaning by individuals. In this process, every student constructs the meaning based on his/her experiences, knowledge, skills, and values differently. If so, some important questions emerge: If each student constructs the meaning him/herself differently and independently, how the assessment will be done? Will the standardized or traditional tests suffice to make a decision about students' different learning and development? Which criteria will be used in this process? Who determines these criteria and will these criteria be appropriate for all students? All of these questions point that constructivist learning approach requires a new, different assessment approach, namely alternative assessment.

In constructivist learning process students are expected to solve the problems, to produce a new explanation, to reach a deep understanding, to show a performance, ect. Therefore, assessment should support this kind of learning. In literature there are some terms which meet this requirement: alternative assessment, performance assessment, authentic assessment, process assessment, etc. Alternative assessment is defined as an assessment approach including all techniques except traditional ones (Sawyer, 2004; Yilmaz, 2009). Authentic assessment is an assessment type in which students are required to use their knowledge and skills in real life or close to it (Mathison, 2001; Yilmaz, 2009:468). Alternative assessment includes both performance and authentic assessment. In this process, assessment is not separated from learning itself. This approach consists of activities that also provide the possibility for active learning.

Brooks (1999) argues that an assessment done throughout teaching by participating in student-teacher interaction, by observing student-student interactions, monitoring students' thinking processes and providing materials for students as they work gives more information about students' learning when compared to tests and traditional assessment applied as isolated from learning process. Traditional assessment approaches generally are criticized because of not allowing for students' creativity, for being rote and not taking individual difference into account. Therefore, in measurement and assessment applications of knowledge obtained in a constructivist way, it should be focused on more complex structure of students' success instead of to be focused on separated from each other and isolated skills and knowledge (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001). Since alternative assessment focuses to whole process and multidimensional development of students, many techniques such as performance tasks, portfolio, project, self-peer-group assessments, etc. are used in this process. Various assignments such as making a presentation in the classroom related to the topic researched about, preparing a newspaper or a magazine, making a poster, creating maps having different properties, writing a story or an article, exhibiting a drama, carrying out a survey, making observation and designing an experiment can be developed and assessed by means of this approach (Çalişkan & Yiğittir, 2008; Alici, 2008).

From the viewpoint of social studies teaching, it seems that this approach has usefulness and serves for the goals of social studies. Pat (1993) claim that the assessment of essential concepts, acquired values, obtained knowledge and skills in social studies course is deficient and unsuccessful. Along with this, O'Brien (1997) states that skill acquisition is less accepted and emphasized in the social studies curriculum compared to other curricula.

In other courses, students display a variety of skills revealing basic gains in contrast to social studies course which focused directly on citizenship education (Öztürk, 2006) and students enter exams by means of tests about citizenship which is the main goal of the curriculum (O'Brien, 1997). It is quite difficult to measure decision-making and active participation skills using standardized tests, despite these skills are accepted as the main aim of social studies course (Pat, 1993; Bolinger & Warren, 2007) because a test which has a standard set of response cannot evaluate the participating skills in the society. From this viewpoint, it is necessary to create opportunities for students to exhibit citizenship skills by means of real or akin-real assignments if the development of these skills is considered important (Pat, 1993).

The use of alternative assessment approaches in social studies education plays a vital role in materializing the main goal of the curriculum. Social studies requires- to a greater degree- the students to be sensitive towards different viewpoints, be able to emphasize the abilities to analyze the social affairs and events from different perspectives, to take on active responsibilities in the community and the environment, and to ensure participation through various ways in the society and interaction with the society, in comparison to lessons that focus on numeric or linguistic studies. That way, students are able to gain first-hand experience to grow up as active citizens, which is the main goal of social studies, who are trying to build up awareness of problems based on real-life problems and who are aware of their own roles in solving the problems (O'Brien, 1997). As put forward by Moon (2002) the best assessment, far beyond evaluating the success level of a student in a limited field of topics, should assess the impact on the student. Social studies aims at exhibiting a stance by drawing the attention of the students to current issue, by establishing the ideas based on various perspectives and investigating from various sources. In this context, for example, having the student to write an article in the school or local newspaper, other than carrying out a research about a topic in the course and present it as a report, is a more original implementation (Moon, 2002), and provides more information about students' development. Research conducted to investigate the effects of the use of alternative assessment approach and techniques on social studies teaching provides strong evidence. The results of this research indicate that this approach has effects positively on students' academic success, their attitudes towards the course, self-efficacy perceptions and motivations. In addition, it has been found out that students like to work with such techniques. Students understand the tasks more easily by using the rubrics and conduct their own studies. Therefore they see these tools as useful. Applied research indicates that as teachers gain experience about these approaches, positive effects of it increases. Moreover, despite they regard to use these approaches and techniques as positive, they abstain from using these techniques (Zimbicki, 2007; Karakuş, 2006; Altintaş & Altintaş, 2008; Moon, 2002; Yanpar Şahin, 2002; Pfeifer, 2002; Jonson, 1999).

The results of research conducted with the aim of identifying the status of the application of the new social studies curriculum in Turkey have revealed various problems encountered by the teachers regarding measurement and assessment. In this research, it was found out that teachers generally have preferred traditional assessment techniques; despite they have positive views about these approaches. As classes become crowded, use of portfolios, observation forms and interviews decrease. Teachers' reluctance, crowded classes, ignorance about these approaches and techniques, limited time and assessment difficulties were the other important problems (Çelikkaya,

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Karakuş & Öztürk Demirbaş, 2010; Erdemir, 2007; Algan, 2008; Dündar, 2008; Acun & Kamber, 2007). Teachers think that this assessment approach is difficult (Kaya & Ersoy, 2007). Much research refers to the inadequate teacher training and parents' support as the sources of these problems (Erdemir, 2007; Algan, 2008; Adanali, 2008). In addition to these results, it was understood that teachers see themselves as inadequate (Parmaksiz & Yanpar, 2006; Aykaç, 2007). The study carried out by Hersan (2008) discloses the opinions of parents about the use of performance tasks in social studies courses. According to this, it has been established that besides parents who have a positive opinion about performance tasks, they also reckoned it negative with regard to students' lack of knowledge on how to carry out investigations, heavy work of projects, school expenses and rising stationery needs.

An important contrast or gap is noticeable when the results of applied researches related to the use of alternative assessment approach in social studies course is compared with the results of descriptive research related to the status determination. It is noticed that while teachers assess the approach to be positive, it is not reflected in sufficient extent in their classroom. Regarding this problem, the aim of this research is to determine the problems encountered during the measurement and assessment dimension of the curriculum and to produce and apply the solutions that can be developed for them and to assess the results of the solutions.

Methodology
Design

This study was conducted with collaborative action research method. Action research is defined as "a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront their everyday lives" (Stringer, 2007:1). This method gives a chance on working collaboratively for both a researcher and a practitioner (teacher, etc.) to solve the encountered problems (Yildirim & Şimşek, 2006:296). In this study mainly three phases were followed: The first phase included defining the problem, the second phase included developing, implementing and monitoring the action plan, and the third phase included determining of the teacher, students and parents' opinions about action plan and solutions proposed by them.

Participants

The participants of the study consisted of a social studies teacher, thirty seventh grade students-13 boys and 17 girls- and their parents in Maltepe district of Istanbul. Average of students' ages was thirteen. They were also attending to different courses to be prepared to the SBS (central exam). Socio-economic status of the school was said to be middle level. The social studies teacher was thirty years old, had been teaching for ten years, and was studying for master degree.

The Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, data was collected in three main steps: 1) Determination of the status before intervention: to determine the real status of the application of assessment dimension, 2) Monitoring and changing process: to monitor the application of the action plan and to make changes as needed, 3) Determination of the reflections of the action plan: to evaluate the contribution of the intervention for solution of the problem. In this context, the following data collection techniques were used:

Table1. *Data collection techniques and schedule*

	Prior to intervention (Two months)	During monitoring process (Five months)	After the intervention
With Students	• Open-ended questionnaire form (with all students) • Semi-structured interview (with 12 students)	• Open-ended questionnaire form (with all students) • Focus group interview (with 12 students) • Informal interview • Informal observation	• Open-ended questionnaire form (with all students) • Semi-structured interview (with 12 students)
With Teacher	• Semi-structured interview	• Informal interview	• Semi-structured interview
With Parents	• Open-ended questionnaire form	-	• Open-ended questionnaire form
Classroom	• Semi-structured observation	• Semi-structured observation	-

In an action research, data analysis process continues at every stage of the research. In this study all data was analyzed through qualitative descriptive analysis. According to this, initially all data were transcribed. Afterwards, to reach a general sense of pattern, they were read separately. In the second phase of the analysis, each transcript was coded in detail and then compared with the others. Finally, the latest coding list was obtained. This process was performed for each phase of the study. Research findings were presented in conformity with research steps. To quote participant students' and parents' responses in the open-ended questionnaire, every participant was assigned to a number such as 1st student, 3rd parent. For the students interviewed, code names were used, such as Serkan and Hakan.

Procedure

This study was carried out during the 2009-2010 academic year. General procedure followed was summarized as below:

- Permissions were taken from Ministry of Education, parents and students.
- Before intervention, data were gathered to determine the real status of application of measurement and assessment dimension.
- In the second phase, an action plan was developed and implemented together with teacher to improve the status. In this study teacher was a main practitioner. All lessons were observed by the researcher. Intervention included the use of alternative

assessment techniques in addition to previous assessment approaches used in social studies courses. The main aim of the intervention was to use the alternative assessment techniques such as performance, portfolio, project and classroom assessments; concept maps; observations; rubrics and other scales; peer, group and self-assessment, etc. This implementation continued for five months.

- After the intervention, data were collected to evaluate the intervention and action plan in terms of teacher, students and parents' views.

Findings

This section includes main findings of the study. Findings are presented under three headings in conformity with the research stages. In this framework, the first heading includes the findings reached about the problem and current status of the measurement and assessment dimension of the curriculum. The second heading includes the main action plan steps and its effects. The last heading includes teacher, students and their parents' views about the intervention and alternative assessment approach.

Findings from the study

In the first stage of the study, it was aimed to determine the application status of the curriculum and its assessment dimension. As a result of the data analysis, two main themes emerged. The first one is related to curriculum and constructivist learning approach. The second one is related to measurement and assessment dimension of the curriculum.

Views about curriculum and constructivist learning approach and applications. The findings of the study indicated that the teacher generally had positive attitude towards constructivist learning approach and curriculum changes. According to the teacher, new curriculum provides active learning environment for students and makes them more interested to social studies topics. Providing richness and depth in topics, application diversity and material richness were some other positive features of this approach as stated by the teacher. Nevertheless, she had doubts about some issues. She believed that applying the constructivist learning approach efficiently is not possible and can be insufficient for able students. In addition, she stated a problem of inadequate training related to new curricula during the curriculum changes. She stated her opinion as follows:

> "So I think it has become very good for both teachers and students. Because I was thinking that former curriculum did not assist for students and it was rote learning. In many topics students was getting bored and teaching was difficult because the topics were not attractive for students… Work load for the current curriculum is not light, but for example, in terms of course materials, because it provides different kinds of material it he course becomes very intensive. I think that quality of current education is better than the former."

The second issue related to how to apply the constructivist curriculum. It was understood that she had some problems in putting the curriculum into practice. The teacher stated that she has been trying her best to meet the requirements of the approach, but has encountered some problems during this process such as being too dependent on textbook, ignorance of parents and students about new learning approach, having difficulties in

implementing some teaching methods, time constrains. In addition to all of these, the teacher emphasized that she would like to be able to implement the curriculum more effectively.

At this stage, the findings from the data analysis are related to parents' views about constructivist learning approach. Data analysis indicated that parents' views differ in three aspects. The first group of parents stated that they were highly ignorant to new curriculum approach. A majority of parents expressed this idea. Other group of parents stated positive views about constructivist curriculum. For example 5th and 22nd parents expressed their views by saying, *"We don't know anything about this curriculum" and "I do not know of any"*. Transition to active learning and causing positive changes on students were main positive features expressed by parents. For instance, 3rd parent mentioned his/her opinion with the words, *"I am not informed enough about it but I think it is a better system than rote method and it encourages individuals to investigate, so it is good"*. 18th parent highlighted his/her view with these statements: *"He/she is able to produce own solutions. He/she uses computer or other sources without any helping"*. The last group reflected a negative viewpoint about new curricula and constructivist learning approach. It was understood that these parents focused mostly on knowledge. They thought that this curriculum and approach would cause to an illiterate society. For example 2nd parent stressed his/her doubt in the following excerpt:

> "In Turkey, because everything has changed in a short time, I don't know how long this will continue. Formerly, students were used to studying from their textbooks. Now there is no need for this. I don't think that they reach the knowledge". Same doubts were expressed by 23rd parent with these words: "Certainly I think it is lack and wrong. Child whose parents have time, money and interest will have a better education. I think that this approach will cause a difference among people."

Views about measurement and assessment dimension of the curriculum and applications. The second subheading is concerned with the views and status of the measurement and assessment dimension of the curriculum. According to results of the analysis, the teacher had positive views about assessment approach of the curriculum. She stated that this assessment approach has some advantages such as providing facility of assessment, neutrality and standard, helping to guide, blocking prejudices. The following expression made by the teacher indicated teacher's general view about assessment dimension of the curriculum:

> "So, I think it was approached to this issue as it should be. If we speak of a process in constructivist learning approach and claim that process evaluation is important as well as outcome assessment, these are necessary, it should be done. For a child, self-assessment, peer assessment and to receive feedback in the process of assessment are very necessary. Otherwise, everything is unclear. So, children don't understand what you say. They do their own thing. You assess and mark according to your criteria. There is a gap between the two".

At the same time, the teacher stated some features as disadvantages of this approach since they require additional work and intensive effort, being extremely intensity of the curriculum. So, she thought this process as highly problematic, and she was confused. The following statements of teacher supported this finding:

> "My mind is not clear about this topic. And actually, I don't know what more should be done and how. And I don't know how to reflect on it. This is not only valid for me but also for my colleague. When I talk to them, I see that they don't know either".

Looking at the teacher's practices, it is seemed that there are many problems in this process. First of all, the teacher was familiar with a very limited number of assessment techniques and tools. In one semester she used three written examinations, one performance task, general judgments and projects for only a few students at the end of the academic year. The main reason for not applying this approach effectively seems that appropriate approach and behavioral style to this approach are not settled. Teacher's explanations indicated this problem:

> "Doing an investigation according to criteria didn't settle. It is not important what you say, they do what they want to do. So, when they are assessed according to criteria, they don't understand... So, to be assessed traditionally according to criteria didn't settle".

In addition, using rating scales tools ineffectively, not acting according to directions, parents' perceptions of studies such as homework and performance assessment as a burden, parents' unnecessary involvement in student homework, time constrains and ignoring individual differences in assessment were found out as the other problem sources.

Results from the analysis showed that students had both positive and negative views of assessment. Some students stated that alternative assessment techniques were enjoyable and had the potential of enhancing the perception of success, facilitating understanding, providing an opportunity to show their skills and to increase the grades. For example Sevil stated her positive opinion with the following words:

> "Performance tasks, projects are better... In exams I get exited, I feel that I'm under stress. This causes a lack of attention. So, in performance tasks I can receive help and this is better".

Nevertheless, a group of students highlighted some negative aspects of this approach, such as being unnecessary; making lessons boring, worrying about group assessment.

Parents' views related to assessment approach of the curriculum were similar to their views about curriculum and constructivist learning approach. The main problem which emerged from data is the ignorance about measurement and assessment, especially alternative assessment approaches. Many parents stated this situation with similar words: "*I don't have any information.*" (For example 2nd, 7th, 8th, 12th parents). Some of them had positive opinions on these techniques because they provide a holistic assessment and improve different skills. For instance 20th parent expressed this view in this statement: "*I don't have enough information, I think this is a good approach because it provides holistic assessment*". Some parents highlighted a discord between national central exam and approach of the curriculum and class applications.

The findings as summarized above set ground for the intervention. From data gathered at the first stage of the study, it was understood that the teacher in the study was willing to apply the constructivist curriculum and alternative assessment approach. But she stated that she had some problems. Lessons could not be properly organized in accordance with the constructivist learning approach, students and parents were not informed enough about new learning and assessment approach. The teacher also mentioned that she was not informed about alternative assessment approach and techniques. To apply the alternative assessment approach effectively, lessons should be arranged according to constructivist learning approach. Because, assessment should not be conceived of being separate from

learning itself. In this context, an action plan outlined below was developed and implemented.

The Findings Related to Implementation and Monitoring of the Action Plan

Action plan mainly aimed to develop the applications of the teacher, especially about alternative assessment approach and process, to inform the students and their parents about constructivist learning and alternative assessment approaches, therefore to ensure the implementation of the curriculum effectively. In this context as the first main step, a literature review was planned about alternative assessment approach and techniques with the teacher throughout five months. Both the teacher and a researcher reviewed the theoretical and practical sources, and then developed new learning and assessment tasks. This step aimed to develop both the teacher's professional development and classroom applications.

The second main step included the process of informing students and their parents. With this aim, three meetings were organized for students and one for parents. In these meetings, constructivist learning and alternative assessment approaches, their responsibilities were introduced to them. In parents' meeting, twenty-two parents attended to the meetings. A letter introducing these approaches was written for parents and sent to all of them. Students' meetings were re-organized according to the requirements which appeared in the process.

The implementation process of the action plan was monitored and some changes were made in the plan. Data gathered during the implementation process indicated that students were generally satisfied with the constructivist learning activities. Nevertheless, they have some problems especially in group activities and assessments, performance tasks and portfolios. It was observed that despite the majority of students considered these studies as positive and enjoyable, some of them stated that they were having some problems such as feeling anxious about fair assessment in peer assessments, difficulties with working in a group, having organizing problems, marking group work. To solve these problems group works and marking system were re-arranged. Students were divided into performance groups with respect to their competencies. In the marking system, individual contributions of students to group work were considered as much as the group-score. In addition, it was observed that these problems decreased over time as they became accustomed to new learning and assessment approach. Similar problems occurred in using assessment tools such as rubrics, check lists, etc. To collect a portfolio was a very new task for students. Initially, they got confused about what they would add to their portfolio, though they had been informed about these techniques in the meetings. Therefore, to support the students about these tools, meetings were re-organized according to requirements and systematical feedbacks were improved. Like group work and performance tasks, students got used to preparing a portfolio in time. But generally they considered this technique negative.

In the process of the literature review and producing the alternative assessment tools, some challenges were encountered. Especially reading the sources was a very challenging problem for the teacher in terms of time constrains. After these reviews, alternative assessment task and tools were developed. Similarly, time constrain was a problem in this process.

Findings Related to the Results of the Action Plan and Intervention

In the third stage of the study, views of the teacher, students and their parents were investigated related to action plan and the process of the alternative assessment applications. The current heading includes views of the participants. These findings are briefly presented in three themes as views, acquisitions, and encountered problems.

Views related to the intervention and alternative assessment. At the stage of determination of the problem, it was understood that lessons could not be properly arranged in compliance with the constructivist learning approach. Therefore, expected assessment process did not occur effectively. So, initially, lessons were arranged according to constructivist learning approach. After the analysis of the data, it was understood that students were generally satisfied with this learning process. Positive aspects stressed by students were having enjoyable lessons based on activities, working in groups, using worksheets, active participation in lessons, and those effects on easy understanding and permanence, having positive attitudes towards the course.. For example, Hakan stated his satisfaction with these expressions:

> "It was very enjoyable. We learned many things and the things I learned became more permanent, so, it was good". Similarly, Serkan mentioned his opinions in these statements "I think it is good. Beforehand, we were used to watching videos from Vitamin. But now, we started to understand the topics with worksheets, group works better… We are learning and having fun. I learned better than last year".

Some students also considered this approach negative. According to these students, the most negative aspects of this approach was that the studying process was intensive and tiring. In addition, requiring more effort was the other negative features attributed by the students. Moreover, students mentioned some additional features of the process as negative such as overusing the worksheets, collecting the portfolio, using structured grids and writing portfolio background. Some students stated their negative views about the process as follows:

> "It was enjoyable and interpretive, my participation to lessons increased. But it was a little bit tiring." (15th student),
> "This study environment seemed to me as intensive."(18th student),
> "So, now we have started to do projects in social studies course. My project friends were students I didn't like. So, I didn't like projects." (Gökhan)
> "I am bored with structured grids. I can't do these grids." (21st student).
> "Collecting a portfolio was difficult. I've had difficulties in producing the original products. I think collecting it was an unnecessary activity. Despite I learned new things in some areas, it was not necessary. We already learned enough in lessons." (22nd student).

Acquisitions reached from intervention. This theme defines the acquisitions gained in the intervention by the teacher, students and their parents. First, the teacher stated that she had many acquisitions. The most useful gains for her were being informed about alternative assessment approach and techniques, having experience to develop these task and tools, applying them. Because literature review comprised the basis of her professional development about these approaches, she put her theoretical knowledge into practice. She mentioned acquisitions which she has gained with the excerpt below:

> "So, for example, I couldn't understand some techniques. You can understand how you can use them by virtue of the literature review. You learn what you do as technically and then you can use. For instance,

sometimes I had tried to use these techniques, at that time I couldn't produce new tasks before I started to study this kind of studies. Without reading its philosophical basis, I could meet an example outside, I could produce similar examples. But now, because I understood it well, it helped me producing new things. I was very busy before this project. I can't say that I reviewed it deeply… When compared to last year, I understood these techniques better than last year."

In addition, she stated that she had self confidence to use these techniques after the intervention. The other important acquisition for her was to reach the feedbacks about students and to use them to improve the students' status and to plan next studies. She stated that she became aware of that she can use these techniques. Similarly, after the intervention she stressed that she had an opportunity to apply her plans which are in her mind. As mentioned before, she was willing to teach with more constructivist learning approach and use alternative assessment techniques.

In the intervention process, it was found out that the students had many acquisitions form these approaches. These acquisitions were expressed by the teacher and students as well as parents. Both having more constructivist lessons and using alternative assessment techniques caused students to be more interested to the social studies course. This process especially affected their perspectives toward learning and social studies course in a positive way. For instance, Meltem said that she didn't like the social studies course. The following statement reflects a change in her thought: *"It was too enjoyable... It contributed to the lessons; I began to like the social studies course"*. Similarly, some parents mentioned same effects: *"I think he/she liked it more after this application."* (6th parent), *"I saw he/she studied eagerly and determinedly."* (7th parent).

Towards the end of the intervention, as they were used to this approach, students started to follow the instructions and acted in accord with them. In addition, development of research, self expression and regular and disciplined study abilities were other important gains of students. For example, teacher expressed her thought with the following words:

"Certainly, it was very good for students. I think it was very useful for them. First, social studies was a course to be memorized, this perspective has changed their opinions. Second, they began to realize that memorizing and reading without meaning is not learning. As they had some difficulties on some topics and met different things, they started to discern what the learning is. For many students, especially students participating in the lessons, it helped improving themselves. Most of them became much more conscious to investigate different things and to do research. As they already say, expression skills improved more."

The increase in the value of the responsibility was one of the most important gains of students. By the time of progress, students began to plan themselves and to get up according to feedbacks. In addition, students began to take into consideration the assessment scales, rubrics, etc., and to behave with respect to them. For example, 10th and 9th parents stated these developments with the following words respectively, *"He/she studied more attentive", "I see he/she is doing his/her homework with more discipline and excitement"*.

Problems encountered during intervention. The third theme emerged from data reflects the problems encountered in applying the action plan and alternative assessment approach. Some of the findings related to encountered problems during the intervention were mentioned under the second heading. The teacher, students and parents expressed some of the same and further

problems after the intervention. In terms of teacher, literature review process had some difficulties such as requiring excessive effort and time. In addition, despite the literature review provided important benefits for her, study area and alternative assessment, still seemed to be unknown area for her and to get used to them was very difficult. To develop the new assessment tasks and tools was time consuming works. Moreover teacher stated that group works and group assessments were other problematic issues. Teacher stated this problem with the following sentences:

> "Too much time is required. So, I have to focus on only this issue and to do something. This is outside my engagements, for example, when I focus on a class; I might neglect the other classes. This semester I taught to 7th and 8th grades. When I prepare for 7th grades, I can apply it, there is no problem with them, but I might neglect 8th grades… I think this problem stems from lack of having grasp of subject matter. If I have the grasp of the field, this review would not disturb me… Each technique has an extended literature, you have to read it. Supposing that you apply a technique, you have to review this technique; you have to read about it. But, this is a challenging issue for a teacher, this is very intensive".

Conclusion

This study tried to a holistic overview on measurement and assessment dimension of the 7th grade social studies curriculum and its application. Firstly, the study confirms the idea that to improve the implementation of the assessment according to constructivist learning approach, professional development of teachers should be provided. The findings revealed that the teacher had better applications through the literature review and systematic practice. This finding corresponds with those of Jonson (1999) who refers to the importance and necessity of teacher training on this issue. Despite, this approach ensured the professional development of the teacher about new approaches and provided many gains for her; it was a hard process for her due to various problems. Actually, this study presented a case study in which the problem was investigated in depth. But to extend its implications seems to be limited because each teacher might not want to take place in this kind of study. So, in-service training of teachers becomes crucial. She had had a formal in-service training about this approach prior to this study. But she stated that it did not work since it was presented in a traditional way, namely direct expression. Therefore, this kind of training should be arranged as workshops which enable teachers both to learn new approaches and to practice them instead of traditional trainings. This result that emerges from this study is similar to that in Büyüköztürk et al. (2010). In this study carried out under the OECD countries, it was found that teachers prefer more applied in-service training. In addition, to implement the alternative assessment approach, lessons should be arranged in a more constructivist way. In this context, the importance of in-service trainings to fulfill the alternative assessment becomes more vital. Because, research found out that teachers are ignorant of this approach.

Another important finding of the study is related to informing the parents about these approaches. In this study, parents were informed about new learning and assessment approaches because it was understood that they were ignorant of such approaches. After the informing process, they became more interested in their children's studying process and began to observe them. In addition, parents started to consider the constructivist learning and alternative assessment approach more positively. They stated many gains reached by their children and mentioned their satisfaction with these

developments. These findings call us attention to parents' systematic collaborations. Schools can organize systematic meetings to inform the parents about new developments and to interact with them. This is necessary for constructivist learning approach.

More importantly, this study supported that alternative assessment approach has many utilities for students. Positive changes in students' attitudes, interest and behaviors toward the social studies course, becoming aware of their own learning process, acting in accordance with the instructions, a development in self expression skills, and increase in the value of responsibility are the main gains of students from the intervention. A similar pattern of results was found by Karakuş (2006) and Pfeifer (2002). The researcher especially revealed that the constructivist learning and authentic assessment affect the attitudes of students toward the social studies course. In addition to these findings, gaining habit of the regular studying, providing the understanding easily and permanence were other important results of the study. Same findings were reached by Yanpar Şahin's (2002) study which examined the use of portfolios in social studies course. These positive results put forward the importance of alternative assessment approaches in social studies course and the need for application despite it has some difficulties. To overcome these difficulties, application should be persistent and long-term.

In addition to all these, more long term studies are required to understand the reactions of teacher, student and parents since students have begun to show the appropriate behaviors to the constructivist learning approach and alternative assessment. Besides, teacher's development about this topic requires the time and experience. This study showed evidence of this reality. Same issue was pointed out in Moon's (2002) study. From this point, findings show consistency. Therefore, studies which monitor a process for three or four years should be done. Furthermore, this study presents a case study in which a teacher, thirty students and their parents are included. Secondly, more extended studies in which teachers who have different conditions can be arranged with a larger action group. Thus, more comprehensive studies can be conducted to examine the effects of different conditions on applying the measurement and assessment of the curriculum.

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