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# Concept Teaching in a History Course: An Analysis of Secondary Education History Curriculum and Course Books in Turkey

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to review concept teaching for a history course, and analyze and compare the case of secondary education history curriculum and course books in Turkey in this context over the past decade. The concepts to be taught were written item-by-item in the 10th-grade (2008) history course curriculum, whereas this was not the case in the 9th- (2007) and 11th- (2009) grade history course curricula. The history course curricula that was prepared for the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades in 2018, and consolidated into a booklet, drew attention to the importance of concept teaching and aimed to teach the concepts within the course; however, it did not specify the concepts to be taught in this curriculum. While examining the history course books prepared for secondary education, it was observed that the 9th-grade history course book prepared in 2009 introduced the concepts under the heading 'Basic Concepts' at the beginning of each subject, and the 10th-grade history course book introduced the concepts under the heading 'Basic Concepts' at the beginning of each unit; however, there was no list of concepts in the 11th-grade history course book, neither at the beginning of the unit nor at the beginning of the subject. As a result, it may be suggested that the target concepts should be introduced word-by-word in history course curricula and these concepts should be taught in history course books using alternative teaching methods.

**Keywords:** Concept Teaching, Social Sciences Teaching, History Teaching, History Course Curricula, History Course Books

## 1. Introduction

Concepts have a significant role in the emergence and maturation of scientific thought and in learning at the expected level. For this reason, a specific terminology for a certain discipline has been formed in all branches of science (Köstüklü, 2019). The concepts that constitute the fundamentals of the discipline of history and history teaching provide historical researchers with ease of expression and representation, while on the other hand, they

facilitate the process of building knowledge for the discipline of history (Candan and Koçer, 2013; Kop and Katılmış, 2016). Because people build their knowledge on the fundamental concepts of any subject (Bruner, 1991:87). The realization of learning in a history course depends on understanding the concepts, such as the main source, causes, consequences, and changes, peculiar to history (Lee, 2005). Each concept belonging to the discipline of history is a tool used to think, question, define, analyze, synthesize, and discuss historical events and objects; organize historical information, derive general statements, see similar aspects and differences, find models, and establish connections between historical events (Van Drie and Van Boxtel, 2007; Çiydem and Özdemir, 2015). As in other branches of science, it is mandatory to accurately and completely teach the concepts specific to the field in order to achieve the goals aimed at teaching history (Kılınç et al., 2015). One of the main goals of history teaching is to ensure that the students are able to understand and use historical concepts (Van Drie and Van Boxtel, 2007). It would be rather difficult to succeed in a history course if the concepts are not fully taught (Candan and Koçer, 2013). The student will only be able to correctly use and apply the taught knowledge in daily life if it is taught using the correct means and techniques of teaching, and is properly internalized by the student (Güneş et al., 2010). In this way, students will be able to learn to evaluate complex problems using concepts (Twyman et al., 2006). Concepts make it easier for people to distinguish and relate events and thoughts (Ülgen, 2004; Coşkun and Köroğlu, 2016). Historical thinking ability develops depending on the conceptual development of the student (Dilek, 2007). When students learn historical concepts, they understand the relationships, events, institutions in history, and, in short, how life existed in that period. The student is expected to acquire the basic and historical thinking skills through teaching of the correct concepts. Since concept teaching constitutes the fundamentals of history teaching, this subject has also been widely discussed in the literature (Doğanay, 2002; Akınoğlu and Dirioz, 2007; Dilek, 2007; Dönmez et al., 2008; Yılmaz, 2008; Boadu, 2015; Çevik et al., 2017).

To correctly teach the concepts belonging to an age/period and their meanings, respectively, while explaining a certain age/period in history courses facilitates the student to better understand the knowledge to be acquired in the following years and to improve his/her mental depth towards the subject (Çiydem and Özdemir, 2015). However, the fact that some concepts in historical subjects are specific to a single period, and that the students will probably encounter these concepts only a few times throughout their history education, restrict their ability to understand and learn these concepts (Van Drie and Van Boxtel, 2007).

History, as a course, contains some problems for students and teachers arising from its own nature. One of these problems is the difficulty in making abstract history topics easy for students to understand (Safran, 2009). Gagne divided the concepts into two parts, as concrete and defined (abstract) concepts. Concrete concepts are learned spontaneously beginning in the first months of life. However, learning abstract concepts usually require instruction (Senemoğlu, 2000). Some historical concepts are more concrete and simple, while others are rather abstract and complex (Candan and Koçer, 2013). Since historical concepts are generally abstract and theoretical, students face various problems in understanding and using basic concepts (Van Drie and Van Boxtel, 2003). The abundance of abstract concepts in history lessons makes the lesson boring. It becomes even more boring, particularly for students who have not yet passed the abstract operations period (Aslan and Şeker, 2013) For example, additional concepts, such as parliament, representation, and government, should be referred to when explaining the concept of democracy. Each of these concepts is abstract and difficult to understand (Van Drie and Van Boxtel, 2003).

The concepts used in history education determine the structure and boundaries of language, as well as the framework of historical and social thought (Akınoğlu and Arslan, 2007). Teaching history is a difficult and challenging task for teachers, as most students perceive history as a boring subject. Many studies have revealed that students are not interested in learning history (Nair and Narayanasamy, 2017). One of the main reasons for this is the language of history. There are many historical concepts that even an adult finds difficult to understand and remember. This situation adversely affects the development of historical thought in students (Akınoğlu and Arslan, 2007). Concepts allow organizing historical information and historical thoughts, derive general statements, define similar aspects and differences, find models and establish connections between historical events (Stradling, 2003). Concepts should be used as they are referred to in the period, the geography that they belong to, and the sources of the relevant period. Thus, concepts will contribute to correctly constructing the

history (Köstüklü, 2019). Some of the concepts we use today may have a different meaning in history. Therefore, the meaning of the concepts may differ according to place and time. Students often interpret a concept based on their current knowledge; therefore, misunderstandings or misconceptions can very easily occur through anachronism. Students should be taught the difference between the meaning attributed today and the meaning referred to in a particular historical context (Van Drie and Van Boxtel, 2007). A number of tools are needed for this teaching to take place. Course books are the most widely used teaching tools at schools. Course books, which are listed in first place among the main sources of reference for students, have a significant impact on their learning (Kalın and Şahin, 2017). Course books play an important role in the student acquiring the desired behavior in lessons and actively participating in the learning environment (Cankılıç, 2010). The course book is crucial in guiding education and learning activities (Semerci, 2004). As course books have been the fundamental material used in history courses over the years, the structure and content of history books have always been very important (Aktekin, 2009). While determining the basic concepts that teachers highlight in their social science lectures, in his study, İltar (2017) concluded that teachers most frequently consider the concepts in the course books. For this reason, it is of great importance to prepare and organize the course books, which are the most widely referred to course materials by students, in a way that will contribute to the teaching of concepts (Ceyhan and Yiğit, 2003; Kabapınar, 2003; Küçükahmet, 2005; Demircioğlu, 2013; Aslan et al., 2015; Ecevit and Şimşek, 2017; Şimşek, 2017). From the point of view of the teacher, the fact that students perceive the course book as the basic resource in concept teaching can be explained by their continuous learning habit of memorizing the concepts rather than learning them by doing-living and thinking (Ecevit and Şimşek, 2017).

Studies have revealed that students try to learn the concepts introduced in the history course books by memorizing, that concept teaching in history is seen as difficult by both prospective teachers and teachers, and all concepts cannot be taught through presentation (Ülger, 2003; Tekin et al., 2004; Akınoğlu and Arslan, 2007; Bal, 2011; Memişoğlu and Tarhan, 2016; Seyhan, 2017; Ünal and Er, 2017). Success has been found to be low in studies carried out to assess the level of teaching historical concepts to students (Keskin, 2003; Bektaş and Bilgili, 2004; Kop and Satılmış, 2016). The deficiencies in concept teaching make learning difficult and even pose an obstacle before it (Novak, 1984).

It has been suggested to make use of methods such as organizing out-of-school tours to learning environments, such as museums and archaeological excavations, for students and benefiting from interactive concept cartoons and concept maps. It has also been determined that concept teaching would be easier if different teaching strategies, methods, and techniques, such as collaborative learning models and analogy, were used (Köksal, 2006; Akınoğlu and Aslan, 2007; Akbaş and Toros, 2016; Gürkan and Doğanay, 2016; Nair and Narayanasamy, 2017)

## **2. Aim**

This study aimed to examine the concepts introduced in the history course curricula prepared for the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades of secondary education in Turkey, as well as history course books (between 2007 and 2019). In line with this purpose, the concepts planned to be taught through the curriculum and the course books will be determined and the methods, sample activities, and measurement tools offered by them for teaching concepts will be examined.

## **3. Methodology**

The survey methodology was used in this study. Survey methodology is used to investigate an existing situation as it is. The aims in these studies are represented in the form of questions such as “What was the case?”, “What is the case?” and “What are the components?” (Karasar, 2009). Survey methodology was used in this study since it aims to investigate the significance of the concepts in history teaching, the importance of concepts in history course curricula, and reveal the current situation. Document analysis was used as a method of collecting the data. This method is based on analysis of the written and visual materials containing information about the subject to be researched.

### 3.1. Sampling

The following three subjects were determined as the sample in order to examine the concepts introduced in the history course curricula prepared for the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades of secondary education in Turkey, as well as the history course books (between 2007 and 2019). It was aimed to collect more diverse information by selecting cultural and political history topics that reflected different eras in Turkish history. Units and subjects differed in the curricula prepared between 2007 and 2019. For this reason, different units and subjects were selected in the 2019 curriculum (Table 1).

Table 1: Subjects examined within the context of concepts introduced in secondary education history course curricula.

Grade	Year	Subject	Educational Attainments
9. grade	2007	History Course Unit-5 Subject 2: First Turkish-Islamic State Structures	Evaluates the political, social, cultural and economic developments in Qarakhanid's period.
	2019	Unit-6 Subject 3: The Effect of Islam on Turkish State and Social Structure	Analyzes the changes caused by the adoption of Islamic belief in the Turkish state structure and social life based on the examples of Qarakhanids and Ghaznavids.
10. grade	2008	History Course Unit-2 Subject 6: The Age of Suleiman the Magnificent	Evaluates the effects of political and military activities engaged in the age of Suleiman I (the Magnificent) on the Ottoman Empire's being a world power.
	2019	Unit-5 Subject 6: The Power And Strategic Rivals Of The Ottomans	10.5.6. Analyzes the role of the long-term strategy implemented by the Ottoman Empire on its becoming a world power.
11. grade	2009	History Course Unit-1 Subject 1: State Organization in the First Turkish States	Understands the fundamental elements of the state understanding and organization in the first Turkish states. Key concepts such as independence, country, nation, people, sovereignty, organization and traditions will be mentioned.
	2019	Unit-4 Subject 2: Transition of Ottoman Empire to the Modern Army	11.4.2. Analyzes the political and social dimensions of the regulations on modern military organization and citizen military service in the Ottoman Empire.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Concept Teaching In Secondary Education History Course Curriculum

#### 4.1.1.a. Concept Teaching in the Secondary Education 9th-Grade History Course Curriculum (2007 Academic Year)

The general objectives of the 9th-grade history course curriculum indicated that it was necessary to ensure the correct use of the methods and techniques, as well as the concepts, of the history discipline and the historian skills while doing research on the concepts in the field of history (MEB, 2007). However, the concepts to be taught were not specified separately in the 9th-grade history course curriculum.

The basic approach of the program stipulated that learning was achieved by prioritizing the development of knowledge, concepts, values, and skills. While the assessment tools were listed in the assessment and evaluation section of the history course curriculum, the section titled 'Research Report' of the check lists gave place to the following statement: "He/she used the concepts about the subject correctly and appropriately." The same expression was also included in the example of the rating scales, which was one of the assessment tools. Rubric, which was another assessment tool, evaluated the use of concepts in the same way. It was suggested that concept maps be made, in performance task examples, in order to acquire historical terminology (MEB, 2007).

#### 4.1.1.b. Concept Teaching in the Secondary Education 10th-Grade History Course Curriculum (2008 Academic Year)

Historical comprehension skills, which were included under the title of historical thinking skills in the 10th-grade history course curriculum, stipulated that students should follow a historical approach, that is, they should be able to examine past events from the perspective of those who lived that past with the conditions and concepts of the relevant period in order to comprehend historical texts. For this purpose, students were required to avoid evaluating the past with the concepts and norms of today while examining the sources, such as past findings, documents, diaries, letters, works of art, and literary works. Instead, they were required to take into consideration the historical context in which the events occurred.

The explanations about the implementation of the 10th-grade history course curriculum included the concepts and historical terms listed in accordance with the units, and teachers were asked to introduce these concepts within the lecture text and via methods, such as dictionary work.

The concepts and historical terms determined within the 10th-grade history course curriculum, listed in accordance with the units, were as follows:

- *Unit-1: The Ottoman interregnum, dynasty, reign, customs, feudal landlord (tekmur), voivode, settlement, colonization, patrolling, manorial system, craftsman, ahi community (a Turkish-Islamic guild), guild, gedik system (monopoly of trade right in the Ottoman Empire), fütüvvet (a Turkish-Islamic guild), demesne, yoruks (Turkish nomads in Anatolia), tahrir (Ottoman cadastral records)*
- *Unit-2: Certificate of the Conquest, Amanname (the amnesty decree issued by the Sultan to non-Muslim subjects in particular), Babüssaade (Gate of Felicity), Renaissance, Reform, Catholicism, Orthodox belief, Protestant belief, Calvinism, inquisition, Pontification, dogmatism, humanism, harem, divan-ı hümayun (Imperial Council in Ottoman Empire), rayah, clerk, chamber, province, sanjak, district, muhtesip (Ottoman constabulary), yurtluk and ocaklık (concepts related to country estate), palace servants (birun), The Palace School of the Ottoman Empire (enderun), the military (seyfiye or askeriye), cultural (ilmiye), Scribal (kalemiye), concession, capitulation, treasury, Islamic Ottoman social complex (kulliye)*
- *Unit-3: Holy alliance, Ottoman Reform, parliament, constitutionalism, autocracy, mercantilism, tax farmers (multazim), Mukâta'a (Ottoman package of taxes)*
- *Unit-4: Enlightenment, modernism, insurrection, revolution, Bab-i Ali (Ottoman Sublime Porte), gentry, ayan (notables), malikane and esham (Ottoman treasury items), colonialism*
- *Unit-5: Tanzimat (Ottoman Reform Movement), Pan-Slavism, Pan-Islamism, Pan-Turkism, Ottomanism, Westernism, Ottoman Constitution (Kanun-i Esasi), Chamber of Deputies (Ottoman Empire: Meclis-i Mebusan), party, nationalism.*

Some methods and techniques that were included among the sample activities suggested within the scope of the explanations about the implementation of the 10th-grade history course curriculum required the students to write texts in which they could use their historical thinking skills. In this context, students were expected to pay attention to the correct use of term names, historical idioms, and terms and time concepts. However, the teachers were advised not to expect students to write texts like a historian and they were required to provide guidance to the students on this issue.

Within the scope of the explanations provided about the implementation of the 10th-grade elective history course curriculum, the teachers were required to give particular importance to teaching historical concepts and terms, and it was suggested that they should prepare concept maps and mind maps within this framework.

In the Assessment and Evaluation section, the information provided in the 9th-grade history course curriculum was repeated (MEB, 2008).

#### 4.1.1.c. Concept Teaching in the Secondary Education 11th-Grade History Course Curriculum (2009 Academic Year)

The explanations provided about the implementation of the 11th-grade history course curriculum required that the 9th- and 10th-grade history course curricula should be reviewed in terms of acquiring the knowledge, skills,

concept teaching, as well as the continuity of the course. It was underlined that the acquisitions foreseen in the unit titled ‘History Science’ of the 9th-grade history course were related to the methodology of history and hence, it was suggested that it should be ensured that the students would be able to use the knowledge and skills acquired in this unit in the 11th-grade history course as well. It was stated that specific emphasis should be placed on teaching historical concepts and terms, as in the 10th-grade, and that concept maps and mind maps should be prepared within this framework. However, the concepts to be taught were not specified separately in the 11th-grade history course curriculum.

Some methods and techniques that were included among the sample activities suggested within the scope of the explanations about the implementation of the course curriculum required the students to write texts in which they could use their historical thinking skills. In this context, the students were expected to pay attention to the correct use of term names, historical idioms, and terms and time concepts. However, the teachers were advised not to expect students to write texts like a historian and they were required to provide guidance to the students on this issue. The following remark was placed in the ‘Explanations’ section of the 11th-grade history course curriculum: “The concepts of independence, country, nation, people, sovereignty, organization, and traditions should be mentioned” (MEB, 2009).

#### 4.1.2. Concept Teaching in the Secondary Education 9th-, 10th-, and 11th-Grade History Course Curricula (2018 Academic Year)

The history course curricula for the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades of secondary education were consolidated in a single booklet in 2018. Thus, general explanations for the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades were presented together. General explanations on the concepts included in the history course curricula for the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades of secondary education are given below (MEB, 2018).

Concept teaching was emphasized as follows in the target competencies section of the 2018 history course curricula for 9th, 10th, and 11th grades of secondary education: The program aims to gain the competence to express and interpret the concepts, thoughts, opinions, feelings and facts in the native language, both verbally and in writing (MEB, 2018).

The significance of the concepts was emphasized under the general objectives title of the 9th, 10th, and 11th grade history course curricula of 2018, as follows: “*The curriculum, which aims to teach the topics that make up the content of the units together with the relevant concepts, will contribute to a meaningful and permanent learning process with this structure. The curriculum highlights the fundamental concepts, facts and generalizations provided in each unit. In order to learn historical events in a healthy way, learners need to understand the relationship between fundamental concepts, facts and generalizations related to each event. Students are expected to reach facts based on the concepts and eventually to generalizations based on facts*”. As was understood from these expressions, a meaningful and permanent learning process was aimed by teaching the concepts. It was emphasized that concept teaching was crucial in terms of deriving generalizations by understanding the facts. Concept teaching has been concluded as an important step for improving historical thinking skills into higher levels (MEB, 2018).

Through this program, students were intended to acquire the following attainments: “*To provide information pertaining to concepts, events, facts, individuals and institutions that we need to understand humanity/world, Turks and different periods of Turkish (Anatolian) history.*” As can be understood from these expressions, learning the concepts within the course subjects was determined as an important attainment (MEB, 2018).

With this program, the competencies and skills specific to the field were explained as follows:

“*Chronological Thinking Skill: The prerequisite for acquiring this skill is to comparatively teach temporal concepts such as day, month, year, period, age, century as well as calendar types and related concepts (BC, AD, century, etc.). In order to comprehend historical texts, students are also required to adopt the historical approach; that is, they should be able to examine past events with the conditions and concepts of the period they were lived in and from the perspective of those who lived in that period. For this reason, students should learn to avoid evaluating the past events with today's concepts and norms while examining historical sources such as*

*findings, documents, diaries, letters, works of art, and literary products and they should take into consideration the historical context in which those events occurred*". It was stated that learning the concepts of time and chronology constituted the infrastructure of chronological thinking skills. Learning the concepts of the past and the present was determined to be necessary in order to comprehend historical texts (MEB, 2018).

The issues that teachers should take into consideration in order to functionally use the curriculum of the history course prepared for 2018 are presented as follows: "*One of the fundamental elements that students should attain in order to ensure a meaningful and permanent learning process in history courses are the concepts. After determining the students' current level of knowledge about the unit topics, history teachers should undertake practices (concept maps, concept networks, structured grid, dictionary preparation, etc.) to teach the basic concepts related to a certain subject/topic*". Throughout this program, the teachers were recommended to undertake different methods while teaching the concepts and teach the concepts in a way that allowed students to create a mind map with different aspects (MEB, 2018).

The issues that should be taken into consideration while writing course books in order to functionally use the curriculum of the history course prepared for 2018 are presented as follows: "*While writing the course books, the basic resources pertaining to the field should be used; the concepts and terms related to the field should be written correctly. In addition, current sources that have published scientific studies on history should be used. Concepts specific to the content of each unit should be specified at the beginning of the unit and should further be explained in detail at an appropriate stage while the topic is being discussed. The concepts that are determined as compulsory in order to ensure the student to better understand the topic and at the same time appropriate for the level of the students should be included.*" Throughout this program, it was suggested that the concepts should be introduced at the beginning of the units while preparing the books and should be further discussed in detail within the subject (MEB, 2018).

The history course curriculum prepared in 2018 for secondary education the 9th grade stipulated to briefly explain the written works of the period, such as 'Qutadyu Bilig,' 'Divân-ı Lûgati't-Türk,' 'Atabetü'l-Hakayık,' and 'Divân-ı Hikmet.' Further concepts to be taught were not specified. The concepts to be taught in the 10th- and 11th-grade history course curricula of 2018 were also not specified (MEB, 2018).

#### *4.2. Concept Teaching In The History Course Books Prepared For The 9th, 10th, And 11th Grades Of Secondary Education*

##### *4.2.1. Concept Teaching in the History Course Books Prepared for the 9th, 10th, and 11th Grades of Secondary Education in 2009*

Concepts introduced at the beginning of Unit-5, Subject-2 of the 9th-grade history course book under the heading of 'Basic Concepts' were '*Dandānaqān, Kinik, Divan-ı Lügati't-Türk, Batiniyya, Qutadyu Bilig, Sultan, Nizamiye Madrasahs, Bukhara, and Samarkand*'. These concepts were further discussed in the same subject as follows: Dandanakan was referred in the text and in the reading text, Kinik was described as the tribe that the Seljuks belonged to, Divan-ı Lügati't-türk was included in the reading text, Batiniyya was mentioned in the reading text, Qutadyu Bilig was mentioned in the reading text, Sultan was defined as a concept and its features were explained, Nizamiye Madrasahs were referred in the reading text, and Bukhara and Samarkand were mentioned in the reading text. As is seen, only the concept of the Sultan was defined, while the other concepts were mentioned throughout the subject. The Assessment and Evaluation section of the 9th-grade history course book comprised 'fill in the blanks' and 'match the concepts' questions about these concepts. It was observed that the students were required to answer questions about these concepts with different aspects at the end of the subjects (MEB, 2009a).

The only concept mentioned while discussing the era of Suleiman the Magnificent in Subject-6 of Unit-2 in the 10th-grade history course book was the Capitulations. The concept of capitulation was defined in the book and questions were asked at the end of the subject (MEB, 2009b).



On the other hand, there was no mention about the concepts, neither at the beginning of the unit nor in the subject in the Subject-1 of Unit-1 in the 11th-grade history course book on ‘State Organization in the First Turkish States’. The following methods were used in the 11th-grade history course book to teach the concepts specified in the curriculum: Pictures were given for quiver, sword, saddle, and belt, and the students were asked to match them with the concepts. Concepts such as *kut* (administrative power, leadership), *ülüg-ülüş* (the division of the lands of a country among the members of the dynasty according to the central Asian old Turkish state tradition), and *küç* (God-donated powers and abilities) were explained by means of a table. Pincer Movement (Turan Tactic) was displayed via a diagram. State officials such as *ilteber*, *kül erkin*, *apa*, *tarkan*, *tudun*, and *bitikçi* were explained via a table (Figure 1). Concepts such as *boy* (tribe), *quriltai*, and *toy* were explained by drawn pictures (Figure 2). Concepts such as state, independence, custom, country, and army were displayed by a drawn concept scheme (Figure 3) (MEB, 2009c).

#### 4.2.2. Concept Teaching in the History Course Books Prepared for the 9th, 10th, and 11th Grades of Secondary Education in 2019

Unlike in previous years, the history course books used in 2019 in the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades were written following the same order. The preparation of the history curricula of these three classes, based on the same principles and the collection of the curricula in a single booklet, ensured that the course books were written following the same system. Preparing the history course books of the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades following the same systematic order ensured that they would be more comprehensible for both the teachers and students.

Subject-3 of Unit-6 in the history course book for the 9th grade, titled ‘The effect of Islam on the Turkish state and social structure’, discussed the consequences of the adoption of Islam on the Turkish state structure and social life based on examples from the Qarakhanids and Ghaznavids. The concepts introduced at the beginning of Unit-6 were listed as follows: *Kök Tengri*, *Oguz*, *Qutadqu Bilig*, *Divânü Lügati’t-Türk*, *Atabey*, *Türkmen*, *Divân-ı Saltanat*, *Emir-i Dad*, *Siyasetname*, and *Melik*. The concepts were also specified at the beginning of the subject (MEB, 2019a).

The Subject-6 of Unit-5 in the history course book for the 10th grade, titled ‘Ottoman power and its strategic rivals’, discussed the role of the implemented long-term strategy in making the Ottoman Empire a world power. The concepts introduced at the beginning of Unit-5 in the history course book for the 10th grade were listed as follows: *Fatih (Mehmed the Conqueror)*, *Feth-i Mübin*, *Yavuz*, *Suleyman the Magnificent*, *Capitulation*, *Concession*, *Preveze War*, *Geographical Discoveries*, *Khilafet-i Ulyâ*, and *Protestant* (MEB, 2019b).

The Subject-2 of Unit-4 in the history course book for the 11th grade, titled ‘Transition to the Modern Army in the Ottoman Empire’, discussed the political and social dimensions of the regulations on modern military organization and citizen military service in the Ottoman Empire. The concepts introduced at the beginning of Unit-4 were listed as follows: *Insurrection*, *Nationalism*, *Revolution*, *Tanzimat (Ottoman Reorganization)*, *Reform*, *Liberalism*, *Capitalism*, *Socialism*, *Monarchy*, *Constitutionalism*, *Nizam-i Djedid*, *Vaka-i Hayriye*, *Influence*, *Marxism*, *Absolutism*, *Citizens' Military Service*, *Intellectual Movements*, and *Düyûn-ı Umûmiye* (MEB, 2019c).

While discussing the subject in the 9th-, 10th-, and 11th-grade course books, the concepts were explained in text. Some concepts were introduced in short reading texts. Additional information was provided throughout the subject under the headings “Do you know?, Explain!, Comment!, Answer!, Discuss!” in order to reinforce the concepts and questions were posed to encourage the students to think. Neither a concept map nor any figure/picture was used while explaining the concepts. The students were then required to answer questions about the concepts at the end of the subject.

## 5. Discussion, Conclusion, and Suggestions

This study examined and compared secondary education history course curricula and course books in Turkey within the context of the concepts over the past decade.

All of the curricula prepared in Turkey for secondary education history courses between 2007 and 2018 emphasized the significance of concepts for the history course and aimed to include concept teaching within the lectures. It has been emphasized in the literature that concept teaching should be included in all steps of formal education (Baysen et al., 2012).

While the concepts to be taught were written separately in the 10th-grade (2008) history course curriculum, they were not introduced separately in the 9th- (2007) and 11th- (2009) grade history course curricula. This issue was criticized in the current study, similar to the literature (Dündar, 2008; Avaroğulları, 2014). Introducing the concepts to be taught in the subject separately in the curriculum is important in terms of developing a common understanding of history.

The history course curricula for 9th, 10th, and 11th grades, which were collected in a single booklet in 2018, underlined the importance of teaching concepts and it was aimed to teach the concepts within the course; however, the concepts to be taught were not separately specified in this curricula.

When examining the secondary education history course books, it was observed that the concepts were introduced under the title of 'Basic Concepts' at the beginning of each subject in the 9th-grade history course book of 2009, while they were introduced under the heading 'Basic Concepts' at the beginning of the Units in the 10th-grade history course book. On the other hand, the 11th-grade history course book did not include a list of Basic Concepts, neither at the beginning of the unit nor at the beginning of the subject. Therefore, there was no unity in terms of the concepts introduced in the course books. These findings on this subject were similar to the findings in the literature (Akinoğlu and Arslan 2007; Aslan et al., 2015). This was a consequence of the difference between the 9th-, 10th-, and 11th-grade history course curricula. In their study confirming these findings on this issue, Aslan et al. (2015) stated the following: "*Failure to include explanations about the basic concepts at the beginning of any unit negatively affect students' ability to understand the Subject. Accordingly, introducing the basic concepts related to the Subject will have significant contributions on learning the course*". Findings similar to those of the current study on the attributions of the course books were also found in the literature (Oral and Tama, 2013).

It was observed that the concept teaching methods were used quite successfully in the 11th-grade history course book. The use of concept maps and pictures related to the concepts had major consequences in terms of better teaching of the concepts. Similar to the current study; Nair and Narayanasamy (2017), who further demonstrated experimentally that concept maps embedded in the historical learning process help students to learn historical concepts in a meaningful way, stated that: "*Sstudents try to organize the concepts from general to specific and they can comprehend the relationship between the concepts when they are displayed graphically*". Similar to the current study, the importance of teaching the relationship between concepts has been frequently emphasized in the literature (Çolak, 2010; Coşkun, 2011). Similar to the study herein, the necessity of using different methods aside from memorizing the words in concept teaching has also been emphasized in the literature (Aktekin, 2009; İlter, 2017).

It was further observed that the course books prepared in 2019 for the 9th, 10th, and 11th grades in secondary education were systematically similar. The concepts to be taught were listed at the beginning of the units in these books, not at the beginning of the subjects. It was further found that the books prepared in 2019 explained the concepts within texts and did not exhibit different methods in terms of concept teaching. Additional information was provided throughout the subject under the headings 'Do you know?', Explain!, Comment!, Answer!, Discuss!' in order to reinforce the concepts, and questions were posed to encourage the students to think. However, this method was thought to be insufficient for teaching concepts. These findings in this regard were similar to those of other studies in the literature. It was further revealed that the course books prepared by the Ministry of Education, as well as private publishing houses, for social studies did not follow a specific method for teaching concepts (Kılınç et al., 2015)

## 6. Recommendation

This research revealed that the concepts to be taught were not clearly stipulated in the curricula. The concepts to be taught should be clearly specified in the future curricula to be prepared. It is believed that the curricula will attain the expected feature of guiding teachers in this respect.

This study further revealed that the course books prepared in 2019 did not benefit from different teaching methods, such as concept maps and illustrated concept maps. It can be suggested that concepts can be taught in history course books using different teaching methods. In addition, it may be suggested to provide supplementary explanations in the context of unknown concepts in history course books, with short notes to be inserted at the beginning of the subjects or at the bottom of the pages.

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