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Comparison of the Turkish and USA Primary and Secondary School Social Sciences Curriculums in the Context of Economic Literacy

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Abstract

Economic literacy comprises of having information about economy themes as scarcity, supply and demand, markets, opportunity costs, resources, productivity, economic growth, and systems, etc., giving correct decisions about economy issues and demonstrating correct economy behaviors. Rising interest to improve the levels of economy awareness of individuals has increased the importance of economic literacy. Economic literacy is an issue which concerns all sections of society, thus also primary and secondary school students closely.

In this study, primary and secondary school social science curriculums of United States of America (New York) were compared to Turkish primary and secondary school social sciences curriculum in terms of economic literacy content of the programme. The data were collected through document examination and investigated by means of content analysis. In consequence of primary and secondary school social sciences curriculums examinations; different and similar implementations were detected between programs of two countries in terms of economic literacy context.

Keywords: economic literacy; primary and secondary school; social studies; currie	culum; content analysis.

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1. Introduction

"Social Studies" is the most inclusive of all primary and secondary school subjects, and could be defined as "the study of all human enterprise over time and space" [38:266]. Barth states that social studies is the integration of social science and humanities concepts for the purpose of problem-solving and decision-making for developing citizenship skills on critical social issues [7:17].

Determining what is included in the social studies curriculum requires facing key questions about social knowledge, skills, and values, including how best to organize them with respect to specific subject matters (e.g., history, geography, economy, etc.). Therefore, it is not surprising that social studies has been racked by intellectual battles over its purpose, content, and pedagogy since its very inception as a school subject in the early part of the 20th century [29:25].

The most commonly used and accepted knowledge-based or discipline-oriented definition of social studies is:

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systemic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world [25].

In this regard, this paper investigates social science curriculums of Turkey and United States of America in terms of economic literacy content of the programme. This paper may possess a significant contribution to both social science literature and curriculum studies.

This study is composed of five sections. The first section highlights economic education and economic literacy concept. The second section explains the development of economic literacy content in social science curriculum. Section three describes the data used in this study and also shows methodology followed in this study. Empirical findings are presented and discussed in section four and the conclusion is discussed in final section.

2. Economic Education and Economic Literacy

People must make choices because we have unlimited wants but limited resources. Since limited resources do not allow us to have everything we want, we must choose the things we want most. Choosing one thing also means giving up the opportunity to choose something else. Economics is essentially a study of choices and decision making. Prices are set in the market place based on what consumers are willing to purchase and the price they are willing to pay [24:174].

"Literacy" is a technology of power and the self that either serves to reproduce existing social formations or serves as a set of cultural practices that promote democratic and emancipatory change [9].

"Economic Literacy" depends on understanding and employing key concepts such as scarcity, supply and demand, markets, opportunity costs, resources, productivity, economic growth, and systems, etc. [6], [11], [23]. Economic literacy also entails the application of theories that describe the interconnections among concepts and how they play out within economic structures.

Economic literacy is crucial for society. In this regard, if economic literacy fails to address multicultural and humanitarian challenges that exist in a laissez-faire neoliberal economy, it can reinforce a stratified, unequal, and punitive society [17].

Economic literacy is important for understanding historical events and outcomes, and is important to students' potential success in their lifetimes. As Rivlin [27] once observed, "without a basic understanding of how the economy works, what the... terms and concepts are, the average citizen is likely to be left out of any conversation... about what is happening in the economy and what to do about it." According to Suskind [39] economic information and skills are requisite knowledge for all students in a democracy, regardless of their socioeconomic contexts.

Kourilsky [18] argues that, large numbers of today's at-risk elementary school students will never reach high school. Without economics instruction during their elementary school years, these students are not likely to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for functioning successfully within the economic system.

Joshi [15] gives below rationales for economic education in U.S. secondary schools:

- Decision making: to help students make macro (public issues) and micro (personal finance) decisions
- Ideological skepticism: to help students become wise consumers of economic theory and ideology
- Affective socialization: to help students take certain economic commitments and values to heart
- Workforce preparation: to help students learn vital business skills and prepare for corporate life

Economics, like most other kinds of academic content and skills, can be taught successfully young people. The level of success varies according to many variables, such as socioeconomic status, academic ability, reading ability, and motivation. Overall, however, it is clear that young people are able to learn economic ideas.

Researches were done in order to assess whether elementary and secondary students can learn economic concepts in a regular school setting. Schug and Birkey [31], and Berti and Bombi [1] also examined economics education in elementary school and they found that young students are fully capable of understanding a variety of economic concepts. Schug and Lephardt's [36], and Schug's [33] researches on teaching economics to children have indicated that older students grasp economic ideas with more sophistication than younger students. Schug and Walstad's [32], and Laney and Schug's [20] studies also indicate that young children at the elementary school level are fully capable of learning and remembering concepts in economics.

In this regards, economy literacy appears to be developmental. In a recent study of Schug & Hagedorn "if we teach it, they will learn" is stated in the context of teaching economics to children [35].

There is some disagreement about how economics should be included in the curriculum at the secondary level. Some argue that it should be stressed primarily in a capstone economics course, taught by a teacher who is well-trained in understanding and teaching key ideas of the discipline. Others believe that economics can be taught effectively through integration into existing courses such as history and government. However, leaders in elementary education are less prone to such debates. The assumption is usually made that economics, if it is to be taught at all, will need to be integrated into other areas of the curriculum. Social studies and mathematics are the most obvious areas in the curriculum where economic concepts can be stressed. Of these two subjects, the social studies program is the place where economic ideas probably are most useful [17:167].

Boyle-Baisse and Zevin [2] argues that primary and early intermediate grades are good times to introduce fundamental economic concepts, such as scarcity, supply and demand, and opportunity cost. In addition they remark that notions of relationship, such as market system or international trade, may need to be taught later [2:145].

VanFossen [40] suggests four best practices for economic education:

- use children's literature to teach economic concepts,
- use internet resources to provide interactive experiences,
- use simulations to provide direct practice in economic life, and
- draw from pre-packaged curricula as a resource for exemplary, well-honed lessons.

3. The Development of Economy Content in Social Science Curriculums

The formal introduction of social studies to the US school curriculum was marked by the publication of The Social Studies in Secondary Education in 1916. This publication was prepared by the Committee on Social Studies of the National Education Association's (NEA) Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Schools. It included an emphasis on the development of citizenship values [40:2].

An early proponent for integrated, issue-oriented social studies, social studies pioneer and professor of education at Teachers College, Columbia University, Harold O. Rugg proposed that in order to understand contemporary society, youth should grasp its economic influences. His advice seems foresighted today. It is never too soon to develop children's knowledge of economic ideas, aims, principles, and institutions.

Harold O. Rugg spent nine years writing a textbook series that became the first unified social studies curriculum. As Nelson states, "before Rugg created his Social Science Pamphlets there were no social studies texts nor were there any social studies courses." [38:64].

From the 1960s to the 1970s a spirit of reform gripped the social studies, known as the "New Social Studies Movement" [5]. With this movement, traditional programs in social studies were replaced with more sophisticated curricula that stressed basic concepts across well-defined social science disciplines [12].

The most prominent benchmark curriculum in economics at the primary grade level was Our Working World by

Lawrence Senesh [37]. Senesh has structured the discipline of economics in a conceptual framework that is clearly defined and graphically portrayed. He has simplified the vocabulary so that those without extended knowledge of economics can also understand and utilize economics on a more pragmatic basis. Senesh used both textbooks as well as children's stories to teach economic concepts. Jenness [14] identifies Senesh's work as the leading economic education program for young students.

During the 1980s and 1990s, coinciding with the U.S. reform movement towards a standards-based system of education, the National Council on Economic Education (NCEE) worked on formulating a voluntary national curriculum commonly known as the Master Curriculum Guide. This curriculum guide provided a catalog of economic concepts and accompanying teaching materials [30].

The National Council of Economic Education (NCEE) Standards are shown below [26].

- Scarcity
- Marginal Cost/Benefit
- Allocation of Goods and Services
- Role of Incentives
- Gain from Trade
- Specialization and Trade
- Markets Price and Quantity Determination
- Role of Prices
- Competition and Market Structure
- Role of Economic Institutions
- Role of Money
- Role of Interest Rates
- Role of Resources in Determining Income
- Profit and the Entrepreneur
- Growth
- Role of Government
- Using Cost/Benefit Analysis to Evaluate Government Programs
- Macroeconomy-Income/Employment, Prices
- Unemployment and Inflation
- Monetary and Fiscal Policy

These standards also include a set of benchmarks (for grades 4, 8, and 12) that elaborate on the principles in increasingly sophisticated levels of attainment. The NCEE provides a range of materials to help teachers incorporate the material into their curricula, and on-line lessons are linked directly to each content standard [28].

In 1994, the Goals 2000 Educate America Act mandated the development of standards in nine core subject areas, including economics. The National Council on Economic Education (NCEE) lobbied for inclusion of

economics in Goals 2000, it found funding for the development of the economic standards, and it brought other groups in economics and education together as a coalition to write content standards for the primary and secondary grades [28].

Also in 1994, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) published its own set of curriculum standards for social studies. Social studies education, according to the curriculum standards of the NCSS, promotes civic competence and the development of informed and reasoned democratic citizens. One of the ten themes of the curriculum standards of the NCSS is "Production, Distribution, and Consumption" [25].

A new set of voluntary national content standards in economics, published in 1997, helped to guide administrators, teachers, and policy makers as they considered various educational objectives in the design of state-level content standards [4].

The curriculum standards of the NCSS are revised in 2010. Specifically, the ten thematic strands are the following [10]:

- Culture
- Time, Continuity, and Change
- People, Places, and Environment
- Individual Development and Identity
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Power, Authority, and Governance
- Production, Distribution, and Consumption
- Science, Technology, and Society
- Global Connections
- Civic Ideals and Practices

4. Methodology

This research aims to reveal the similarities and differences between the Turkish and US elementary and secondary social studies curriculum in terms of economic literacy content. For these purposes of the study, qualitative research methods were conducted. The qualitative research methods focus on explaining the relations between the events and the facts unlike quantitative research which focuses on numerical data [42:39].

The technique of this research is content analysis which is one of the qualitative data analysis techniques. Ole R. Holsti [13:601] defines content analysis as "any technique for making inferences and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages". As commonly known by definition, content analysis enables to scrutinize what is and what is not within the written, verbal and visual communication [8].

The main data source for the social studies curriculum documents is the internet public access database of the Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Education and New York State Education Department.

The curriculum documents were analyzed through manual content analysis approach, developed according to the methodological recommendations of Yıldırım and Şimşek [42]. Five characteristic stages of this approach are:

- Accessing to documents,
- Checking the authenticity,
- Understanding the documents,
- Analyzing the data, and
- Using the data

The use of content analysis is justified by the exploratory nature of this research. Furthermore, Krippendorff [19] emphasizes that content analysis allows for replicable and valid inferences from texts. Despite the existing advantages of applying this method, such as transparency and flexibility [3], there are also some disadvantages, such as the quality dependency of the documents analyzed [3], related to their credibility, authenticity, representativeness, and availability. However, this approach is appropriate for dealing with the defined research aims.

5. Empirical Results

5.1. Turkish Curriculum

Turkish primary school social science curriculum is designed basically on system of learning domains. There are two basic documents that define this system of domains: first one for the 4th-5th grade students and the other one is for the 6th-7th grade students. Those documents are called as "The Vision and Structure of Social Sciences Curriculum: Skills, Concepts, Values and Learning Domains" [22]. There are nine domains for both 4th-5th grade students and for 6th-7th grade students. In each of these documents learning domains are defined in detail. The following are the domains defined in Turkish Curriculum:

- Individual and Society
- Culture and Heritage
- People, Places and Environment
- Production, Distribution and Consumption
- Time, Continuity and Change
- Science, Technology and Society
- Groups, Institutions and Social Organizations
- Power, Administration and Society
- Global Connections

One of these domains is especially important for this study: Production, Distribution and Consumption. For each of the domains there are "key ideas" defined and "skills and values" that the students should gather after the relevant education process. For instance, the 5th grade students are supposed to gather the skill of "interpreting simple statistical data" and the value of "diligence" under the "Production, Distribution,

Consumption" domain. The following is an example of the key ideas of 4th-5th grades curriculum under the "Production, Distribution, Consumption" domain: the students realize that they have limitless needs but limited resources and they learn that needs should be determined according to existing resources. Another example of "key idea" from 6th-7th grade students' curriculum states that: It is aimed that the students realizes the resources the country and they think about what could be done for growth of the country.

In addition to these comprehensive documents there are "Programs" for each class. In these programs "educational attainments (performance indicators)" and "sample tasks" are defined for each learning domain. The following is the summary table for the number of attainments and sample tasks.

Table 1: Table of Summary

	4th grade	5th grade	6th grade	7th grade
Number of Attainments (performance indicators)	7	7	6	6
Number of Sample Tasks	9	5	9	8

5.2. US (New York State) Curriculum

According to "Learning Standards for Social Studies" document [16] for NY State, there are three phases in teaching economics to elementary and intermediate students. Those phases are: defining key ideas, determining performance indicators and providing sample tasks. Under the key ideas there are performance indicators defined and sample tasks identified. There are five standards which are similar to the domains in Turkish systems.

The standards are:

- History of the United States and New York
- World History
- Geography
- Economics
- Civics, Citizenship, and Government

This system is almost identical to the Turkish system, except the fact that in the US system "key ideas" are defined in a more systematic way. In US system, you can directly relate "key ideas" with "performance indicators" which is not possible in Turkish system.

5.3. Comparison between Turkish and US Systems

In the this part of this study, there are comparison tables of Turkish and NY State curriculums with respect to

"the Performance Indicators (PIs)". In NY State curriculum, there are 4 key ideas (2 for elementary level and 2 for intermediate level).

5.3.1. Elementary level

Key Idea 1- The study of economics requires an understanding of major economic concepts and systems, the principles of economic decision making, and the interdependence of economies and economic systems throughout the world.

The following table shows the existence of performance indicators in Turkish Curriculum compared to the US curriculum for Key Idea 1.

Table 1: Key Idea 1 Comparison

US Cı	Curriculum Turkish Curriculum				
Eleme	entary Level - Key Idea 1	4th grade	5th grade	6th grade	7th grade
PI 1	know some ways individuals and groups attempt to satisfy their basic needs and wants by utilizing scarce resources	~	X	X	X
PI 2	explain how people's wants exceed their limited resources and that this condition defines scarcity	v	X	X	X
PI 3	know that scarcity requires individuals to make choices and that these choices involve costs	V	V	~	X
PI 4	study about how the availability and distribution of resources is important to a nation's economic growth	X	V	V	V
PI 5	understand how societies organize their economies to answer three fundamental economic questions: What goods and services shall be produced and in what quantities? How shall goods and services be produced? For whom shall goods and services be produced?	X	•	•	X
PI 6	Investigate how production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of goods and services are economic decisions with which all societies and nations must deal	V	V	V	X

included

X not included

Key Idea 2- Economics requires the development and application of the skills needed to make informed and well-reasoned economic decisions in daily and national life.

The following table shows the existence of performance indicators in Turkish Curriculum compared to the US curriculum for Key Idea 2.

Table 2: Key Idea 2 Comparison

US C	urriculum	Turkish Curriculum			
Elem	entary Level - Key Idea 2	4th grade	5th grade	6th grade	7th grade
PI 1	locate economic information, using card catalogues, computer databases, indices, and library guides		V	<i>V</i>	V
PI 2	collect economic information from textbooks, standard references, newspapers, periodicals, and other primary and secondary sources		V	~	V
PI 3	make hypotheses about economic issues and problems, testing, refining, and eliminating hypotheses and developing new ones when necessary	X	X	X	X
PI 4	present economic information by developing charts, tables, diagrams, and simple graphs.	•	•	V	✓

✓ included

X not included

Intermediate level

Key Idea 3- The study of economics requires an understanding of major economic concepts and systems, the principles of economic decision making, and the interdependence of economies and economic systems throughout the world.

The following table shows the existence of performance indicators in Turkish Curriculum compared to the US curriculum for Key Idea 3.

Key Idea 4- Economics requires the development and application of the skills needed to make informed and well-reasoned economic decisions in daily and national life.

The following table shows the existence of performance indicators in Turkish Curriculum compared to the US

curriculum for Key Idea 4.

Table 3: Key Idea 3 Comparison

US C	urriculum	Turkish Curriculum			
Intern	nediate Level - Key Idea 3	4th grade	5th grade	6th grade	7th grade
PI 1	explain how societies and nations attempt to satisfy their basic needs and wants by utilizing scarce capital, natural, and human resources				
PI 2	define basic economic concepts such as scarcity, supply and demand, markets, opportunity costs, resources, productivity, economic growth, and systems	V	V	V	V
PI 3	understand how scarcity requires people and nations to make choices which involve costs and future considerations	~	~	~	V
PI 4	understand how people in the United States and throughout the world are both producers and consumers of goods and services	X	✓	X	~
PI 5	investigate how people in the United States and throughout the world answer the three fundamental economic questions and solve basic economic problems	X	V	V	~
PI 6	describe how traditional, command, market, and mixed economies answer the three fundamental economic questions	X	X	X	X
PI 7	explain how nations throughout the world have joined with one another to promote economic development and growth.	X	X	X	✓

✓ included

X not included

The tables located above reveal the "performance indicators" included in US curriculum but not included in Turkish curriculum. Similarly, there are some "performance indicators" included in Turkish curriculum but not included in US curriculum. The following table shows these performance indicators.

Table 4: Key Idea 4 Comparison

US C	urriculum	Turkish Curriculum			
Intern	nediate Level - Key Idea 4	4th grade	5th grade	6th grade	7th grade
PI 1	identify and collect economic information from standard reference works, newspapers, periodicals, computer databases, textbooks, and other primary and secondary sources	V	~	V	V
PI 2	organize and classify economic information by distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, placing ideas in chronological order, and selecting appropriate labels for data	X	~	~	~
PI 3	evaluate economic data by differentiating fact from opinion and identifying frames of reference	X	X	X	X
PI 4	develop conclusions about economic issues and problems by creating broad statements which summarize findings and solutions	X	X	X	v
PI 5	present economic information by using media and other appropriate visuals such as tables, charts, and graphs to communicate ideas and conclusions.	~	V	V	V

included

X not included

5.4. Assessment about the Similarities and the Differences between the Curriculums

It is obvious that the curriculums of different nations are shaped according to the cultural, historical, social and economic conditions of these nations. In this sense, some issues covered in curriculum of one nation may not be covered in curriculum of another curriculum or vice versa. Also, different countries may use different methodologies for preparation of their curriculums.

When we look at the US and Turkish curriculums, we see that there is a general similarity between the curriculums in terms of the issues covered. The issues in elementary level curriculum of US are in general covered in 4th-5th grade curriculum of Turkey. The same type of similarity is valid between intermediate level curriculum of US and 6th-7th grade curriculum of Turkey.

Although there is a remarkable level of similarity between the curriculums in terms of issues and concepts covered, there is also a slight difference in the preparation methodology of curriculums as defined above. The

methodology of US system is almost identical to the Turkish system, except for the fact that in the US system "key ideas" are defined in a more systematic way. In US system, you can directly relate "key ideas" with "performance indicators" which is not possible in Turkish system.

Table 5: "Performance Indicators" Included in Turkish Curriculum But Not Included In Us Curriculum

Grade	Performance Indicator	Comparison
4th grade	PI 5	Use consumer rights as a conscious consumer.
4th g	PI 7	Establish links between needs and professions.
	PI 3	Determine the professions related to the economic activities in the region where he live.
5th grade	PI 4	Evaluate the place of the economic activities in the region where he live in country' economy.
	PI 3	Defense the necessity and importance of paying tax in terms of civic responsibility and contribution to country's economy.
	PI 4	Discuss the effects of unconscious consumption of natural resources on human life
ade	PI 5	Evaluate the role of qualified work force for economic growth of Turkey
6th grade	PI 6	Search for the requirements of the professions that he is interested in.
	PI 1	Explain the importance of land (soil) in production and administration
	PI 3	Evaluate the effects of developments in production technology on social and economic life by giving examples from history and today.
	PI 4	Exemplify the functions and role in social life of "foundations" by giving examples from history and today.
4)	PI 5	Identify the institutions that have role in providing occupation and occupational ethics throughout the Turkish history.
7th grade	PI 6	Do planning regarding occupational choices by understanding role of education on providing occupation and in accordance with abilities.

One of the notable differences between the Curriculums is the importance devoted to "choosing profession" in Turkish curriculum. It is a fact that "choosing of right profession" is one of the important problems of Turkish society and Turkish curriculum tries to address this problem. For this purpose, from 4th grade through 7th grade, awareness of students are raised in terms of "establishing links between needs and professions", "importance of choosing right profession" and "understanding the role of education on providing occupation".

Other notable differences are emphasis on "importance of paying tax as a civic responsibility", emphasis on "consumer rights" and "role and functions of 'foundations' in society" in Turkish curriculum.

The following performance indicator under "Key Idea-3" takes place in US curriculum: describe how traditional, command, market, and mixed economies answer the three fundamental economic questions. We do not find a performance indicator similar to this one in Turkish curriculum. Obviously, US authorities want to underscore the different economic systems applied in different political regimes. But Turkish authorities choose not to give emphasis on different economic systems in their curriculum.

Similarly the concept of "opportunity cost" is stressed in US curriculum but we do not encounter this concept in Turkish curriculum.

Also, there are separate passages in Turkish curriculum devoted to explain the importance of "entrepreneurship" for the economy, but in US curriculum the concept of "entrepreneurship" is not stressed powerfully and it is mentioned only in one part as "one of the basic values of the US economic system". As "entrepreneurship" has become a commonly accepted and established value of their economic system Americans do not need to stress on this value. But one of the most urgent and important need of Turkish economy is "entrepreneurship" and this concept is mentioned in curriculum comprehensively.

Similarly, the concepts of "saving, tourism, unemployment, energy" are more powerfully stressed in Turkish curriculums than the US one. Since these issues are important problems and fortunes of Turkish economy, they are mentioned more comprehensively.

Another distinguishing characteristic of Turkish curriculum is defining "values" that students should gain after relevant course. Also there are "lists of concepts" that should be covered during the lessons in Turkish curriculum.

6. Conclusion

Social studies are most inclusive of all school subjects. In a process stretching from the late-19th century to the mid-20th century, the social studies curriculum has been shaped. Educational reforms have led to the infusion of economics as a central component of social studies curricula in every grade level. In this regard, as VanFossen states "economics literacy is integral to the larger goal of social studies educators of creating democratic citizens" [41].

The young people can understand the economy only when learned the economy subjects and thus they have roles much better in their country's economic system. Therefore it is quite important for today's young people to understand how the economy affects the society in the triangle of the producer, consumer and good citizen.

This paper aims to reveal the similarities and differences between the Turkey and US elementary and secondary school social studies curriculums in terms of economic literacy content.

The data for this study were collected through Turkish and US elementary and secondary school social studies curriculum documents examination and investigated by means of content analysis.

The curriculums of different nations are shaped according to the cultural, historical, social and economic conditions of these nations. In this sense, there are differences between Turkish and US curriculums in terms of methodology and content.

Turkish curriculum is based on system of domains one of which is "Production, Distribution and Consumption". There are key ideas, performance indicators and sample tasks for each grade from 4th through 7th.

In US system there are three phases in teaching economics to elementary and intermediate students: defining key ideas, determining performance indicators and providing sample tasks. Under the key ideas, there are performance indicators defined and sample tasks identified. In this system, it is possible to directly relate "key ideas" with "performance indicators" which is not possible in Turkish system.

There is a general similarity between the curriculums in terms of the issues covered. The issues in elementary level curriculum of US are in general covered in 4th-5th grade curriculum of Turkey. The same type of similarity is valid between intermediate level curriculum of US and 6th-7th grade curriculum of Turkey.

There is an emphasis in Turkish curriculum on "choosing profession", "importance of paying tax as a civic responsibility", "consumer rights" and "role and functions of 'foundations' in society". We do not encounter these issues in US curriculum. Similarly, the concept of "opportunity cost" which is not mentioned in Turkish curriculum is emphasized in US curriculum.

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