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Original article

Evidence-Based Learning in the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum: A Cognitive and Curricular Analysis

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum in terms of evidence-based learning through learning outcomes, process components, cognitive skills, and evidence types. The study was designed as qualitative research, and the document analysis method was employed. The data source consisted of the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum updated by the Ministry of National Education of Türkiye. The learning outcomes, process components, and explanatory statements included in the curriculum were analyzed through content analysis. During the analysis process, coding categories were developed based on the literature on evidence-based learning, historical thinking, and inquiry-based learning. The data were examined within the framework of cognitive skills such as information gathering, reasoning, inference, inquiry, comparison, critical thinking, and analysis. The findings revealed that learning outcomes associated with evidence-based learning were included at all grade levels; however, the distribution was not balanced across grade levels and learning domains. The sub-skills most frequently represented in the curriculum were reasoning, information gathering, and inference, whereas higher-order skills such as critical thinking, discussion, analysis, and evaluation were represented to a more limited extent. The findings also demonstrated that evidence-based learning was predominantly structured around historical and written sources, while visual, auditory, digital, and multiple forms of evidence were included less frequently. In addition, the representation of observation and experience-based evidence decreased at higher grade levels. Overall, the study concluded that evidence-based learning occupies an important place within the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum; however, its distribution across cognitive skills, learning domains, and evidence types does not demonstrate a balanced and holistic structure. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the curriculum include more learning outcomes related to higher-order thinking skills and provide a more balanced use of different forms of evidence in order to strengthen evidence-based learning processes.

Keywords: Social Studies, Curriculum, Evidence-Based Learning

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, regardless of time and place, human beings both the subjects and objects of social change have sought to adapt themselves to changing conditions by improving their capacities and acquiring new skills through observation, experience, and learning. Today, the acceleration of technological developments has radically transformed the structure of social life and the competencies expected from individuals, thereby making the quality of countries' human resources and human capital increasingly decisive (Canbal et al., 2020). In order to cultivate well-equipped individuals capable of adapting to the spirit of the age in the face of contemporary paradigms, all segments of society must reorganize their activities at both individual and institutional levels through a new understanding. The primary motivation underlying this need is the insufficiency of conventional skills (Akınoğlu, 2013). In this respect, when considering the institutions in which change is expected to begin, schools are the first to come to mind. In contemporary curricula, the primary objective has become the education of individuals equipped with higher-order skills who are creative, innovative, and entrepreneurial (Deveci, 2018). Accordingly, the role of educational institutions in fostering such skills has become increasingly critical.

Within the education system, which consists of three fundamental components students, teachers, and curricula constitute the framework that determines the direction of the learning process (Gözütok, 2003). The curriculum serves as the primary reference source in shaping the education system. Therefore, curricula play a decisive role in translating change into practice. With the beginning of the twenty-first century, substantial reforms have been introduced into educational curricula in many countries. In this context, local curricula have been restructured in line with international norms (Yurdakal, 2024). One of the most appropriate and contemporary examples of this transformation is the constructivist education system. Although constructivism originated in the West, it has gained acceptance within educational systems across much of the world today. In Türkiye, this transformation has profoundly influenced all curricula developed between 2005 and 2024. With the integration of the constructivist educational approach into curricula, the long-standing rigid and behaviorist understanding has gradually been replaced by an approach in which students play an active role and experiential learning is accepted as a fundamental principle (Sabancı & Şahin, 2005). Contemporary curricula are designed with the aim of educating students as participatory and productive individuals capable of meeting the needs of modern society (Özmantar et al., 2009). Accordingly, contemporary educational approaches adopt a perspective that prioritizes equipping individuals with various skills (Öner & Kınacı, 2021).

In Türkiye, curricula were most recently updated in 2024. Unlike previous reforms, this revision was carried out within the framework of the Türkiye Century Education Model (Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Modeli). The Maarif Model adopts an approach that emphasizes student-centered learning, active participation and social-emotional development beyond traditional instructional approaches shaped

primarily around knowledge and skills (Arslankara & Arslankara, 2024). This perspective indicates that the influence of constructivism continues to be strongly reflected in curricula. One of the curricula prepared from a skill-based perspective is the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum (Güngör, 2024). Skill acquisition also constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of the Social Studies curriculum (Akar & İbrahimoğlu, 2026). Indeed, unlike previous curricula, skills are given a distinctive place within the Social Studies curriculum and are categorized as conceptual skills (basic, integrated, and higher-order thinking skills), field-specific skills (perception of time and chronological thinking, evidence-based inquiry and research, historical empathy, understanding change and continuity, etc.), social and emotional learning skills (self-awareness, social life, common/integrated competencies), and literacy skills (information, digital, financial, visual, cultural, citizenship, data, sustainability, and arts literacy) (Ministry of National Education [MEB], 2024).

In today's world, where knowledge has become increasingly diversified, the ability to think analytically requires competencies such as recognizing stereotypes and prejudices and making decisions. These competencies gain meaning through the inclusion of research and evidence utilization skills in human life (Sağlam & Bilgiç, 2018). Introduced among the skills intended to be acquired by students through the 2005 Social Studies Curriculum, the skill of using evidence is directly associated with evidence-based learning, which enables critical thinking, inquiry, and comparison (Sönmez, 2022; Aytekin, Sağlam, & Aktın, 2022). A fundamental assumption of evidence-based learning is that there is no single absolute truth. Students who support their views with evidence learn that even when the same evidence is used, different conclusions may be reached and multiple interpretations may emerge (Pala, 2021; Altun, 2024). In this respect, evidence-based learning can be regarded as a theory-based pedagogical model that translates the principles of constructivism both individual meaning-making and learning through social interaction into concrete instructional practices (Sarıboğa, 2025). This approach encourages the development of higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and critical thinking among students in social studies courses (Bozkurt, 2018). Since evidence-based learning is interdisciplinary in nature, it can be utilized within appropriate contexts across many disciplines associated with social studies, including history, citizenship, geography, archaeology, economics, sociology and psychology (Kabapınar, 2021).

Although referred to by different names over the last two decades, evidence-based learning has maintained a permanent place within social studies curricula. A review of the relevant literature reveals studies focusing on students' cognitive skills, academic achievement, and historical thinking processes (Kızıl, 2018; Bekret, 2019; Malbeleği, 2022; Ginesar, 2022; Aytekin, Sağlam, & Aktın, 2022); studies concerning students' processes of analyzing historical evidence and using primary sources (Tangülü, 2016; Çıdacı, 2015; Işık, 2008; Alabaş, 2007); studies addressing the issue within the context of higher-order skills such as critical thinking, decision-making, and multidimensional evaluation (Doğan, 2024; Ünalmış & Meydan, 2023; Şener, 2019); studies examining the effects of evidence-based learning on

student attitudes, participation in the learning process and instructional practices (Sağlam & Bilgiç, 2018; Şekerci & Kabapınar, 2019; Şekerci, 2021; Karakurt, 2024; Yabansu et al., 2024); as well as studies focusing on teacher opinions and curriculum analyses (Öner & Kınacı, 2021; Yedikaya et al., 2024; Çelikkaya & Boyraz, 2018; Tavacı & Sarıçam, 2021). When these studies are evaluated collectively, it becomes evident that no comprehensive study has yet examined the entirety of the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum within the context of evidence-based learning. This gap has made it necessary to examine comprehensively how evidence-based learning is positioned within the curriculum. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was determined as the systematic examination of the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum in terms of evidence-based learning with respect to learning outcomes, process components, and evidence types.

In line with this purpose, the following research questions were addressed:

- How are learning outcomes associated with evidence-based learning distributed across grade levels?
- How are learning outcomes associated with evidence-based learning distributed across learning domains?
- How are the learning outcomes included in the curriculum addressed within the scope of the sub-skills of evidence-based learning (e.g., information gathering, reasoning, inference, critical thinking)?
- How are the evidence types used within the scope of evidence-based learning (written, visual, oral, digital, etc.) represented in the curriculum?
- To what extent are the learning outcomes included in the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum associated with evidence-based learning?

MATERIALS and METHODS

Method

This study is a qualitative research study aiming to examine the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum in terms of evidence-based learning and the document analysis method was employed. Document analysis is a data collection method conducted through the examination of existing records and documents (Turan, 2020). In this study, the Social Studies Curriculum was evaluated within the scope of evidence-based learning.

Data Source

The data source of the study consists of the Social Studies Curriculum updated by the Ministry of National Education in 2024. The learning outcomes, process components, and explanatory statements included in the curriculum were determined as the units of analysis.

Data Analysis

The data obtained in this study were analyzed using content analysis, one of the qualitative data analysis methods. Content analysis is an analytical method that enables the systematic examination of written texts and documents within the framework of predefined concepts and categories (Ekiz, 2017).

A theory-driven (deductive) content analysis approach, rather than an inductive one, was adopted in this study. Accordingly, the coding categories were not derived directly from the curriculum; instead, they were developed based on the cognitive skills emphasized in the literature on evidence-based learning, historical thinking, and inquiry-based learning (Alabaş, 2007; Bozkurt, 2018; MEB, 2018; Sağlam & Bilgiç, 2018; Aytekin, Sağlam, & Aktın, 2022; Ginesar, 2022; MEB, 2023; Başpınar & Kabapınar, 2023; Çelikkaya & Boyraz, 2018). The literature conceptualizes evidence-based learning as a cognitive process grounded in skills such as information gathering, evidence analysis, reasoning, inference, inquiry, comparison, and critical evaluation. Accordingly, these cognitive skills were adopted as the primary coding categories of the study.

During the coding process, each learning outcome and process component was evaluated in terms of the cognitive skills it reflected. Statements requiring students to access, identify, examine, or verify information were coded as information gathering; statements involving establishing relationships among evidence, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, or providing justifications were coded as reasoning; and statements requiring students to draw conclusions from available evidence were coded as inference. Likewise, statements requiring inquiry, comparison, evaluation, analysis, interpretation, and discussion were classified under the corresponding cognitive skill categories. When a learning outcome or process component reflected more than one cognitive skill, multiple coding was applied. Therefore, the reported frequency values represent coding occurrences rather than the number of learning outcomes or process components.

The data analysis process of the study consisted of the following stages:

1. Examining the learning outcomes included in the curriculum.
2. Identifying statements related to evidence-based learning within the learning outcomes and process components.
3. Coding the identified statements according to the predetermined cognitive skill categories (e.g., information gathering, reasoning, inference, inquiry, comparison, critical thinking, analysis, interpretation, and discussion).

4. Classifying the codes according to grade levels and learning domains.
5. Identifying and categorizing the types of evidence represented in the curriculum (e.g., written, visual, oral, and digital).
6. Determining the extent to which the learning outcomes and process components reflect evidence-based learning.

Validity and Reliability

To enhance the validity and reliability of the study, the data analysis process was reported in detail, and the coding procedure was conducted systematically. After the coding categories had been established based on the relevant literature, the learning outcomes and process components included in the curriculum were independently coded by the researcher. During the coding process, each learning outcome and process component was evaluated according to the predetermined coding criteria based on the cognitive skills it reflected. To ensure the reliability of the coding process, expert opinions were obtained from one faculty member specializing in Social Studies Education and another faculty member specializing in Measurement and Evaluation. The experts were provided with the purpose of the study, the coding categories, the coding criteria, and the coded dataset, and were asked to independently evaluate the learning outcomes and process components. The coding conducted by the researcher and the experts was then compared to identify agreements and disagreements. The cases of disagreement were subsequently re-examined jointly by the researcher and the experts, and a consensus was reached by considering the relevant literature and the predetermined coding criteria.

Inter-coder reliability was calculated using the formula proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994): Reliability = Agreements / (Agreements + Disagreements) × 100The inter-coder reliability coefficient was calculated as 89.43%. Since an agreement rate of 80% or higher is generally considered to indicate acceptable reliability in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994), the obtained reliability coefficient demonstrates that the coding process achieved a high level of reliability.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings obtained from the examination of the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum in terms of evidence-based learning. The findings are presented within the framework of learning outcomes, process components, grade levels, learning domains, and evidence types.

Table 1. The Relationship Between the Learning Outcomes Included in the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum and Evidence-Based Learning

Grade Level	Learning Domain	Learning Outcome	Process Component	Related Evidence-Based Learning Sub-Skill	Skill Level
4	Living Together	Ability to interpret the contributions of the Social Studies course to one's life (SB 4.1.1.)	a) Examines the individual and social contributions of the Social Studies course based on case examples.	Information Gathering	Basic
				Reasoning	Advanced
			b) Gives examples from daily life regarding the individual and social contributions of the Social Studies course.	Interpretation	Advanced
	Our Home: The World	Ability to analyze the relationship between nature and humans based on the immediate environment (SB 4.2.2.)	a) Identifies the elements of the natural environment in the immediate surroundings.	Information Gathering	Basic
				Observation	Basic
			b) Identifies the relationships between the elements of the natural environment and humans in the immediate surroundings.	Reasoning	Advanced
		Ability to share a product created regarding ways to reduce the effects of disasters (SB 4.2.3.)	a) Makes inferences regarding disasters such as earthquakes, avalanches, landslides, floods, and forest fires that have occurred in the immediate environment from past to present based on the sources provided.	Inference	Advanced
				Reasoning	Advanced
	Our Common Heritage	Ability to compare the changes in children's games and toys from past to present (SB 4.3.1.)	a) Lists the characteristics of children's games and toys from past to present based on evidence, observation, and/or experiences.	Information Gathering	Basic
				Observation	Lower
				Reasoning	Advanced
			b) Lists the unchanged characteristics of games and toys over time based on evidence, observation, and/or experiences.	Observation	Lower
				Reasoning	Advanced
			c) Lists the changing characteristics of games and toys over time based on evidence, observation, and/or experiences.	Observation	Lower
				Reasoning	Advanced
		Ability to create a product reflecting family history (SB 4.3.2.)	a) Makes inferences based on the sources obtained regarding family history.	Inference	Advanced
				Reasoning	Advanced
	Our Living Democracy	Ability to interpret the sacrifices made by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the Turkish nation on the road to the proclamation of the	a) Examines sources and evidence related to the sacrifices made by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the Turkish nation during the National Struggle Period.	Information Gathering	Basic
				Reasoning	Advanced

		Republic (SB 4.4.1.)	b) Expresses the sources and evidence related to the sacrifices made by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the Turkish nation during the National Struggle Period visually, orally, or in writing.	Reasoning	Advanced
				Inference	Advanced
		Ability to interpret the contributions of the changes brought by the Republic to our lives (SB 4.4.2.)	a) Examines the changes brought by the Republic through memoirs, stories, and visual materials reflecting the period.	Information Gathering	Basic
				Reasoning	Advanced
			b) Expresses in writing the information acquired regarding the changes brought by the Republic.	Reasoning	Advanced
				Inference	Advanced
	Economy in Our Lives	Ability to interpret graphs related to the consumption of natural resources (SB 4.5.1.)	ç) Makes inferences regarding the relationship between resources and consumption in the given graph related to natural resource consumption.	Comparison	Advanced
				Inference	Advanced
	Technology and Social Sciences	Ability to reflect security rules to be followed in online environments into one's actions (SB 4.6.1.)	b) Makes inferences regarding the security rules to be followed in online environments.	Inference	Advanced
				Reasoning	Advanced
			c)Evaluates inferences regarding the security rules to be followed in online environments.	Critical Thinking	Advanced
				Inquiry	Advanced
		Ability to establish connections between the childhood lives of scientists and one's own life (SB 4.6.2.)	a) Examines the work of scientists based on evidence.	Information Gathering	Basic
				Reasoning	Advanced

As shown in Table 1, evidence-based learning is represented across all learning domains in the 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum, although its distribution is not balanced. Two learning outcomes related to evidence-based learning are identified in the learning domains of *Our Home: The World*, *Our Common Heritage*, *Our Living Democracy*, and *Technology and Social Studies*, whereas *Living Together* and *Economy in Our Lives* each include one related learning outcome. Among the evidence-based learning sub-skills, reasoning (f = 16) is the most frequently represented, followed by information gathering (f = 6), inference (f = 6), observation (f = 4), interpretation (f = 1), inquiry (f = 1), and critical thinking (f = 1). Overall, the findings indicate that the curriculum places greater emphasis on reasoning and inference within evidence-based learning, whereas skills related to evidence questioning and critical evaluation are represented to a more limited extent.

Table 2. The Relationship Between the Learning Outcomes Included in the 5th Grade Social Studies Curriculum and Evidence-Based Learning

Grade Level	Learning Domain	Learning Outcome	Process Component	Related Evidence-Based Learning Sub-Skill	Skill Level
5	Living Together	Ability to interpret the effect of respecting cultural characteristics on living together (SB 5.1.2.)	a) Identifies the effect of respecting cultural characteristics on living together through examples.	Reasoning	Advanced
				Analysis	Advanced
	Our Home: The World	Ability to interpret the changes in the natural and human environment in one's province in terms of causes and consequences (SB 5.2.2.)	a) Examines the factors causing changes in the natural and human environment in one's province.	Information Gathering	Lower
				Observation	Lower
			b) Examines the elements affected by changes in the natural and human environment in one's province.	Information Gathering	Lower
				Observation	Lower
			c) Questions the effects of changes occurring in the natural and human environment in one's province.	Inquiry	Advanced
				Critical Thinking	Advanced
			ç) Expresses the causes and consequences of changes occurring in the natural and human environment in one's province based on the information obtained.	Inference	Advanced
				Reasoning	Advanced
				Comparison	Advanced
		Ability to gather information about neighboring countries of Türkiye (SB 5.2.4.)	a) Identifies the sources to be used in order to access information about neighboring countries of Türkiye.	Information Gathering	Advanced
				Information Gathering	Advanced
			b) Finds information about neighboring countries of Türkiye from the identified sources.	Information Gathering	Lower
			c) Verifies the information obtained from the identified sources regarding neighboring countries of Türkiye.	Inquiry	Advanced
				Comparison	Advanced
		Ability to share a product created regarding the elements of common heritage in one's province (SB 5.3.1.)	a) Makes inferences about the importance of common heritage based on the tangible and intangible cultural heritage elements in one's province.	Inference	Advanced
				Reasoning	Advanced
		Ability to develop perspectives regarding the social lives of the societies that established the first settlements in Anatolia (SB 5.3.2.)	a) Examines sources related to the social lives of societies in the first settlements established in Anatolia.	Information Gathering	Lower
			c) Compares the elements of social life in the first settlements established in Anatolia with those of contemporary social life.	Comparison	Advanced

		ç) Explains the social lives of the societies in the first settlements established in Anatolia by considering the conditions of the period.	Analysis	Advanced
		d) Makes inferences regarding the social lives of the societies in the first settlements established in Anatolia.	Inference	Advanced
		e) Reflects, in their own words, perspectives regarding the social lives of the societies living in the first settlements established in Anatolia based on their inferences.	Reasoning	Advanced
			Interpretation	Advanced
	Ability to compare the contributions of Mesopotamian and Anatolian civilizations to common heritage (SB 5.3.3.)	a) Identifies the contributions of Mesopotamian and Anatolian civilizations to common heritage.	Information Gathering	Lower
			Reasoning	Advanced
		b) Lists the similarities between the contributions of Mesopotamian and Anatolian civilizations to common heritage.	Inference	Advanced
		c) Lists the differences between the contributions of Mesopotamian and Anatolian civilizations to common heritage	Comparison	Advanced
			Reasoning	Advanced
	Ability to question the importance of fundamental human rights and responsibilities (SB 5.4.3.)	b) Asks questions using the 5W1H technique regarding the importance of human rights and responsibilities in social life.	Inquiry	Advanced
		c) Gathers information regarding the importance of fundamental human rights and responsibilities.	Information Gathering	Lower
		ç) Evaluates the accuracy of the information collected regarding the importance of fundamental human rights and responsibilities.	Reasoning	Advanced
			Critical Thinking	Advanced
Our Living Democracy	Ability to gather information about institutions that can be consulted in case of a need or problem (SB 5.4.4.)	a) Identifies the sources from which information can be gathered regarding institutions that can be consulted in case of a need or problem.	Information Gathering	Lower
		b) Finds information from the identified sources regarding institutions that can be consulted in case of a need or problem.	Information Gathering	Lower
		c) Verifies the information obtained from the identified sources regarding institutions that can be consulted in case of a need or problem.	Inquiry	Advanced
Economy in Our Lives	Ability to interpret the effects of efficient resource use on nature and people (SB 5.5.1.)	a) Examines the effects of efficient resource use on nature and people through different sources.	Information Gathering	Lower
			Reasoning	Advanced

Technology and Social Sciences	Ability to discuss the effects of technological developments on social life (SB 5.6.1.)	a) Presents justifications regarding the effects of technological developments on socil life.	Inquiry	Advanced
		b) Identifies inconsistencies in discussions regarding the effects of technological developments on social life.	Reasoning	Advanced
			Inference	Advanced
		c) Refutes or accepts views regarding the effects of technological developments on social life.	Discussion	Advanced
			Critical Thinking	Advanced
	Ability to create a product regarding the importance of the conscious use of technological products (SB 5.6.2.)	a) Makes evidence-based inferences regarding the importance of the conscious use of technological products.	Reasoning	Advanced
			Inference	Advanced

The findings presented in Table 2 indicate that evidence-based learning is represented across all learning domains in the 5th Grade Social Studies Curriculum, although its distribution is not homogeneous. The *Our Common Heritage* learning domain contains the highest number of learning outcomes associated with evidence-based learning (f = 8), whereas *Living Together* and *Economy in Our Lives* each include only one related learning outcome. Among the evidence-based learning sub-skills, reasoning (f = 16) is the most frequently represented, followed by information gathering (f = 11), inference (f = 10), inquiry (f = 4), critical thinking (f = 3), analysis (f = 2), observation (f = 2), comparison (f = 2), interpretation (f = 2), and discussion (f = 1). Overall, the findings indicate that the curriculum places greater emphasis on reasoning, inference, and information gathering within the context of evidence-based learning. In addition, several learning outcomes (SB.5.2.2, SB.5.3.2, SB.5.3.3, SB.5.4.3, and SB.5.6.1) incorporate multiple evidence-based learning sub-skills, indicating that these learning outcomes address evidence-based learning through more than one cognitive skill category.

Table 3. The Relationship Between the Learning Outcomes Included in the 6th Grade Social Studies Curriculum and Evidence-Based Learning

Grade Level	Learning Domain	Learning Outcome	Process Component	Related Evidence-Based Learning Sub-Skill	Skill Level
6	Living Together	Ability to interpret the effects of our cultural ties and national values on social unity (SB 6.1.2.)	a) Examines the effects of our cultural ties and national values on social unity.	Information Gathering	Lower
		Ability to negotiate solution proposals for problems encountered in social life (SB 6.1.3.)	b) Compares different perspectives regarding the causes of problems encountered in social life.	Comparison	Advanced
			c) Develops solution proposals for problems encountered in social life.	Reasoning	Advanced
				Inference	Advanced
			ç)Organizes solution proposals for problems encountered in social life by considering different opinions and ideas.	Inference	Advanced
				Inquiry	Advanced
			d) Defends solution proposals for problems encountered in social life.	Critical Thinking	Advanced
				Discussion	Advanced
	Our Home: The World	-	-	-	
	Our Common Heritage	Ability to question the contributions of the first Turkish states established in Turkestan to our civilization (SB 6.3.1.)	b) Asks questions based on the sources provided regarding the contributions of the first Turkish states established in Turkestan to our civilization.	Inquiry	Advanced
			ç) Evaluates the accuracy of the information collected regarding the contributions of the first Turkish states established in Turkestan to our civilization.	Inquiry	Advanced
			ç) Evaluates the accuracy of the information collected regarding the contributions of the first Turkish states established in Turkestan to our civilization.	Inquiry	Advanced
			d) Makes inferences based on the collected information regarding the contributions of the first Turkish states established in Turkestan to our civilization.	Inference	Advanced
		Ability to reason about the contributions of Islamic civilization to the common heritage of	a) Identifies the contributions of Islamic civilization to the common heritage of humanity.	Information Gathering	Lower
				Reasoning	Advanced

	humanity in the fields of education, science, law, culture, art, and architecture between the 7th and 13th centuries (SB 6.3.2.)	c) Makes inferences regarding the contributions of Islamic civilization to the common heritage of humanity in the fields of education, science, law, culture, art, and architecture.	Inference	Advanced
	Ability to evaluate the changes that occurred in the social and cultural lives of Turks following the acceptance of Islam from the perspective of the period (SB 6.3.3.)	a) Analyzes, based on sources, the changes that occurred in the social and cultural lives of Turks following the acceptance of Islam.	Analysis	Advanced
		b) Recognizes the conditions of the period regarding the changes that occurred in the social and cultural lives of Turks following the acceptance of Islam.	Inference	Advanced
		c) Compares the consequences of the changes that occurred in the social and cultural lives of Turks following the acceptance of Islam with present-day conditions.	Comparison	Advanced
		ç) Explains the consequences of the changes that occurred in the social and cultural lives of Turks following the acceptance of Islam within the conditions of the period.	Inference	Advanced
Our Living Democracy	Ability to question the effects of digitalization and technological developments on the use of citizenship rights (SB 6.4.3.)	c) Collects information regarding the effects of digitalization and technological developments on the use of citizenship rights.	Information Gathering	Lower
		ç) Evaluates the information collected regarding the effects of digitalization and technological developments on the use of citizenship rights in terms of currency and scientific validity.	Reasoning	Advanced
			Interpretation	Advanced
		d) Makes inferences based on the information whose accuracy has been evaluated regarding the effects of digitalization and technological developments on the use of citizenship rights.	Inference	Advanced
Economy in Our Lives	Ability to make inferences about the relationship between economic activities and professions (SB 6.5.2.)	a) Associates economic activities and professions based on observations and experiences.	Information Gathering	Lower
			Interpretation	Advanced
		b) Makes inferences regarding professions that may emerge in the future depending on changes in economic activities.	Inference	Advanced

	Technology and Social Sciences	Ability to gather information about copyright and patent processes related to a product or idea (SB 6.6.2.)	a) Identifies the sources from which information regarding copyright and patent processes related to a product or idea can be collected.	Information Gathering	Lower
				Reasoning	Advanced
			b) Collects information regarding copyright and patent processes related to a product or idea from the identified sources.	Information Gathering	Lower
			c) Verifies the information collected regarding copyright and patent processes related to a product or idea.	Inquiry	Advanced
				Critical Thinking	Advanced

The data summarized in Table 3 show that evidence-based learning is represented across all learning domains of the 6th Grade Social Studies Curriculum except *Our Home: The World*. The *Our Common Heritage* learning domain contains the highest number of learning outcomes associated with evidence-based learning (f = 3), whereas the remaining learning domains generally include one related learning outcome each. Among the evidence-based learning sub-skills, information gathering (f = 8) and inference (f = 8) are the most frequently represented, followed by inquiry (f = 6), reasoning (f = 4), comparison (f = 2), critical thinking (f = 2), interpretation (f = 2), analysis (f = 1), and discussion (f = 1). Overall, the findings indicate that evidence-based learning at this grade level places greater emphasis on information gathering, inference, and inquiry. Furthermore, several learning outcomes incorporate multiple evidence-based learning sub-skills, suggesting that evidence-based learning is addressed through the integration of different cognitive skill categories.

Table 4. The Relationship Between the Learning Outcomes Included in the 7th Grade Social Studies Curriculum and Evidence-Based Learning

Grade Level	**Learning Domain**	**Learning Outcome**	**Process Component**	**Related Evidence-Based Learning Sub-Skill**	**Skill Level**
7	Living Together	Ability to question the importance of effective communication within groups and social life in which one participates (SB 7.1.1.)	c) Collects information regarding the importance of effective communication within groups and social life in which one participates.	Information Gathering	Lower
			ç) Evaluates the accuracy of the information collected regarding the importance of effective communication within groups and social life in which one participates.	Inquiry	Advanced
		Ability to make inferences regarding the attitudes and behaviors demonstrated by Turkish society in the face of national issues (SB 7.1.3.)	d) Evaluates the attitudes and behaviors demonstrated by Turkish society in the face of national issues in terms of their effects on social unity.	Interpretation	Advanced

	Our Home: The World	Ability to interpret the changes brought about by globalization in human and social life (SB 7.2.1.)	a) Examines the changes brought about by globalization in human and social life.	Information Gathering	Lower
				Reasoning	Advanced
			b) Gives examples regarding the changes brought about by globalization in human and social life.	Reasoning	Advanced
				Critical Thinking	Advanced
	Our Common Heritage	Ability to question the policies that enabled the Ottoman Empire to become a world power (SB 7.3.1.)	b) Asks questions based on the provided sources regarding the policies that enabled the Ottoman Empire to become a world power.	Information Gathering	Lower
				Inquiry	Advanced
			c) Collects information from the provided sources regarding the policies that enabled the Ottoman Empire to become a world power.	Information Gathering	Lower
			ç) Evaluates the accuracy of the information collected regarding the policies that enabled the Ottoman Empire to become a world power.	Inquiry	Advanced
			d) Makes inferences based on the acquired information regarding the policies that enabled the Ottoman Empire to become a world power.	Reasoning	Advanced
				Inference	Advanced
		Ability to interpret the reforms implemented by the Ottoman Empire in response to changing world balances in terms of their causes and consequences (SB 7.3.2.)	a) Examines the causes of the reforms implemented by the Ottoman Empire in response to changing world balances.	Information Gathering	Lower
			b) Examines the elements affected by the reforms implemented by the Ottoman Empire in response to changing world balances.	Information Gathering	Lower
			c) Questions the effects of the reforms implemented by the Ottoman Empire in response to changing world balances.	Inquiry	Advanced
			ç) Expresses the causes and consequences of the reforms implemented by the Ottoman Empire in response to changing world balances based on the information obtained.	Interpretation	Advanced
		Ability to share a product created regarding Ottoman cultural and civilization elements (SB 7.3.3.)	a) Makes inferences based on evidence regarding the fundamental characteristics of Ottoman cultural and civilization elements.	Inference	Advanced
			b) Creates a product reflecting their views based on the information contained in the evidence regarding the fundamental characteristics of Ottoman cultural and civilization elements.	Evaluation	Advanced

	Our Living Democracy	Ability to interpret the development of democracy in our country in terms of the fundamental principles of democracy (SB 7.4.3.)	a) Examines the relationship between the fundamental characteristics of democracy and the history of democracy in our country through visual, auditory, and digital historical sources.	Information Gathering	Lower
	Technology and Social Studies	Ability to make predictions regarding the effects of scientific and technological developments on future social life (SB 7.6.1.)	a) Relates evidence, observations, and experiences regarding the effects of scientific and technological developments on contemporary social life.	Information Gathering	Lower
				Reasoning	Advanced
			b) Makes future-oriented inferences by relating evidence, observations, and experiences regarding the effects of scientific and technological developments on social life.	Reasoning	Advanced
				Inference	Advanced
		Ability to make generalizations regarding the fields of study of the social sciences through sample texts (SB 7.6.2.)	a) Collects information regarding the fields of study of the social sciences through sample texts.	Information Gathering	Lower
			b) Identifies the common characteristics of the fields of study of the social sciences through sample texts.	Reasoning / Inference	Advanced
			c) Identifies the differences among the fields of study of the social sciences through sample texts.	Comparison	Advanced
				Reasoning	Advanced
		Ability to conduct scientific inquiry regarding a problem that may be encountered in social life (SB 7.6.3.)	ç) Analyzes and interprets data regarding the solution to a problem that may be encountered in social life.	Reasoning	Advanced
				Analysis	Advanced
			d) Provides evidence-based explanations and develops solutions regarding the solution to a problem that may be encountered in social life.	Analysis	Advanced
				Reasoning	Advanced
			e) Evaluates and shares information regarding the solution to a problem that may be encountered in social life.	Analysis	Advanced

Evidence-based learning is represented across most learning domains of the 7th Grade Social Studies Curriculum. The *Our Common Heritage* and *Technology and Social Studies* learning domains contain the highest number of learning outcomes associated with evidence-based learning (f = 4 each). In contrast, no learning outcomes related to evidence-based learning were identified in the *Economy in Our Lives* learning domain, indicating an uneven distribution across learning domains. Among the evidence-based learning sub-skills, information gathering (f = 9) is the most frequently represented, followed by inference (f = 8), inquiry (f = 8), reasoning (f = 6), critical thinking (f = 4), analysis (f = 3), interpretation (f = 3), comparison (f = 2), and discussion (f = 1). Overall, the findings indicate that

evidence-based learning at this grade level places greater emphasis on information gathering, inference, inquiry, and reasoning, whereas critical thinking, comparison, analysis, interpretation, and discussion are represented less frequently.

Table 5. Distribution of Evidence-Based Sub-Skills by Grade Levels

Sub-Skill	**4th Grade**	**5th Grade**	**6th Grade**	**7th Grade**
Information Gathering	**8**	**12**	**7**	**11**
Observation	4	2	-	-
Reasoning	10	9	6	12
Inference	7	8	8	9
Inquiry	2	6	5	6
Critical Thinking	1	4	2	3
Comparison	1	5	3	2
Analysis	-	3	2	3
Interpretation	2	2	2	2
Discussion	-	2	1	-
Total	35	53	36	48

Table 5 presents the overall distribution of evidence-based learning sub-skills across all grade levels. Information gathering (f = 38), reasoning (f = 37), inference (f = 32), and inquiry (f = 19) are the most frequently represented sub-skills throughout the curriculum. In contrast, critical thinking (f = 10), comparison (f = 11), analysis (f = 8), interpretation (f = 8), discussion (f = 3), and observation (f = 6) occur less frequently. Overall, the findings indicate that evidence-based learning is represented through a diverse range of cognitive skill categories, with greater emphasis placed on information gathering, reasoning, inference, and inquiry across grade levels.

Table 6. Distribution of Evidence-Based Learning Skills by Skill Type and Sub-Skill Level

Skill Type	**Sub-Skill**	**4th Grade**	**5th Grade**	**6th Grade**	**7th Grade**	**Total**
Basic	**Information Gathering**	**8**	**12**	**7**	**11**	**38**
	Observation	4	2	-	-	6
	Reasoning	10	9	6	12	37
	Inference	7	8	8	9	32
	Inquiry	2	6	5	6	19
Higher-Order	Critical Thinking	1	4	2	3	10
	Comparison	1	5	3	2	11
	Analysis	-	3	2	3	8
	Interpretation	2	2	2	2	8
	Discussion	-	2	1	-	3

As shown in Table 6, the evidence-based learning skills identified in the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum are distributed across both basic and higher-order cognitive skill categories. Among the

basic skills, information gathering (f = 38), reasoning (f = 37), and inference (f = 32) are the most frequently represented, whereas observation (f = 6) is comparatively limited. Among the higher-order skills, inquiry (f = 19) is the most prominent, while comparison (f = 11), critical thinking (f = 10), analysis (f = 8), interpretation (f = 8), and discussion (f = 3) occur less frequently. Overall, the findings indicate that the curriculum places greater emphasis on basic cognitive processes, whereas higher-order cognitive skills are represented to a more limited extent.

Table 7. Distribution of Evidence-Based Learning Across Learning Domains

Learning Domain	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	Total
Living Together	1	1	2	2	6
Our Home: The World	2	2	-	1	5
Our Common Heritage	2	3	3	3	11
Our Living Democracy	2	2	1	1	6
Economy in Our Lives	1	1	1	-	3
Technology and Social Studies	2	2	1	3	8

An examination of Table 7 reveals significant differences in the distribution of evidence-based learning practices across learning domains. In this respect, Our Common Heritage (f=11) emerges as the learning domain in which evidence-based learning skills are represented most extensively. This is followed by Technology and Social Studies (f=8), Living Together (f=6), and Our Living Democracy (f=6). In contrast, Our Home: The World (f=5) and Economy in Our Lives (f=3) were identified as the learning domains in which evidence-based learning is represented least frequently. The absence of evidence-based learning at the 6th-grade level within the Our Home: The World learning domain and at the 7th-grade level within the Economy in Our Lives learning domain indicates that evidence-based learning does not demonstrate continuity across learning domains. The inclusion of evidence-based learning across all learning domains is important in enabling students to develop these skills within different content contexts.

Table 8. Distribution of Evidence Types Represented in the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum

Evidence Type	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	Total
Historical/Written Sources (Historical documents, texts, archival records, textbook contents)	5	7	7	8	27
Multiple Evidence Use (The combined use of more than one type of evidence)	3	1	1	1	6
Observation/Experience-Based (Direct observation, daily life experiences, field observations)	5	3	2	1	12
Visual/Auditory/Digital (Visuals, videos, maps, digital contents)	2	1	1	2	6

Table 8 shows that historical and written sources are the most frequently represented evidence types in the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum. Observation- and experience-based evidence is also represented across grade levels, whereas multiple evidence use and visual, auditory, and digital evidence

appear less frequently. Overall, the findings indicate that historical and written sources constitute the predominant evidence types represented in the curriculum, while the use of other evidence types remains comparatively limited.

Conclusion

In this study, the relationship between the 2024 updated Social Studies Curriculum and evidence-based learning was analyzed based on learning outcomes and process components. When grade levels were evaluated collectively, it was determined that learning outcomes associated with evidence-based learning were included at all grade levels; however, this distribution was not balanced. It was found that 10 learning outcomes at the 4th grade level, 11 at the 5th grade level, 8 at the 6th grade level, and 10 at the 7th grade level were directly related to evidence-based learning. This finding demonstrates that evidence-based learning within the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum does not display a linear increase across grade levels but instead exhibits a structure concentrated at certain grade levels.

It was determined that the learning outcomes at the 4th grade level were concentrated particularly around the evidence-based learning sub-skills of reasoning (f=10), information gathering (f=8), and inference (f=7). This distribution appears consistent with the learning experiences included in the curriculum, which are structured around students' immediate environment, nature–human relationships, and fundamental historical awareness (MEB, 2024). This situation is considered to be associated with students' processes of accessing information, reasoning, and generating inferences from evidence-based on concrete experiences. In Social Studies courses at the primary school level, which are structured around examples drawn from daily life, benefiting from evidence-based learning and enabling students to acquire evidence utilization skills is considered important (Sağlam & Bilgiç, 2018). The skill structure identified at the 4th grade level in this study may be regarded not only as limited to the current learning process but also as forming a foundation for higher grade levels. This finding is also consistent with the literature emphasizing that the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes acquired by students play a decisive role in achieving objectives at higher stages of learning (Öner & Kınacı, 2021). In this respect, the finding suggests that evidence-based learning is addressed in the curriculum not merely as an approach for developing specific skills, but also as a developmental structure that prepares students for more complex cognitive processes at subsequent grade levels.

In this study, evidence-based learning at the 5th grade level was found to differ both quantitatively and qualitatively. Compared to the 4th-grade level, the learning outcomes at the 5th grade level were associated with higher-order skills such as inquiry (f=6), comparison (f=5), and critical thinking (f=4). The fact that the learning outcomes associated with evidence-based learning at the 5th-grade level are related to multidimensional thinking processes such as the analysis of environmental changes, historical comparisons and the discussion of social issues appears consistent with this skill structure. The findings obtained are similar to studies indicating that evidence-based learning supports students' use of critical

thinking and higher-order thinking skills (Karakurt, 2024). This finding also indicates that evidence-based learning is addressed in the curriculum not only as a means of accessing information but also as a more comprehensive learning approach that encourages students to establish relationships among different forms of evidence, engage in inquiry, and justify their ideas.

As grade levels increase, a quantitative increase in learning outcomes associated with evidence-based learning would generally be expected. However, within the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum, a decrease in the total number of skills at the 6th-grade level (f=36) was identified. Nevertheless, the prominence of the sub-skills of inference (f=8) and inquiry (f=5) demonstrates that the learning process shifts toward more in-depth analysis and interpretation rather than quantitative expansion. This finding reveals that the learning outcomes associated with evidence-based learning at the 6th grade level have evolved into a more detailed and analysis-oriented structure within the context of historical content and social problems. This progression also reflects the spiral and developmental nature of the curriculum, suggesting that evidence-based learning is not merely intended to increase the number of learning outcomes across grade levels but to promote progressively more sophisticated cognitive engagement with evidence. The effectiveness of a curriculum depends not only on the inclusion of specific skills but also on how these skills are organized within a coherent developmental progression across grade levels.

An examination of the learning outcomes at the 7th grade level demonstrates that the number of skills associated with evidence-based learning increases again (f=48), with reasoning (f=12) and inference (f=9) becoming particularly dominant. These findings may be associated with learning processes that require students not only to access information but also to evaluate historical processes multidimensionally, interpret global developments and employ evidence-based problem-solving skills. In this respect, it can be stated that the learning outcomes associated with evidence-based learning at the 7th grade level were designed with an approach that supports multidimensional thinking processes. This structure also reflects an instructional approach that encourages students not only to access evidence but also to relate different forms of evidence and construct well-reasoned judgments.

When the distribution of evidence-based learning across the learning domains of the Social Studies Curriculum was examined in this study, it was observed that some learning domains included multiple learning outcomes associated with evidence-based learning. These learning domains were identified as *Our Home: The World* at the 4th and 5th grade levels; *Our Common Heritage* at the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grade levels; *Our Living Democracy* at the 4th and 5th grade levels; and *Technology and Social Studies* at the 4th, 5th, and 7th grade levels. In contrast, some learning domains included only a single learning outcome related to evidence-based learning. Furthermore, it was revealed that no learning outcomes associated with evidence-based learning were included in the *Our Home: The World* learning domain at the 6th-grade level or in the *Economy in Our Lives* learning domain at the 7th-grade level. This variation across learning domains suggests that evidence-based learning is integrated more intensively into certain content areas rather than being distributed systematically throughout the

curriculum. From a curriculum development perspective, a more balanced integration of evidence-based learning across learning domains may contribute to greater continuity in students' learning experiences.

One of the prominent findings of the study is the consistent inclusion of evidence-based learning within the *Our Common Heritage* learning domain across all grade levels. This finding indicates that the *Our Common Heritage* learning domain occupies a central position within the curriculum in terms of evidence-based learning. The content structure of this learning domain, extending from family history to the history of civilizations, appears to require students to employ skills such as analyzing, comparing, and interpreting evidence (MEB, 2024).

The findings of the study indicate that evidence-based learning within the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum predominantly focuses on fundamental cognitive processes such as information gathering, reasoning and inference, whereas higher-order skills such as critical thinking, analysis and discussion are represented to a more limited extent. In this context, it was determined that information gathering skills accounted for 23%, reasoning skills for 23.31%, and inference skills for 22% of the curriculum overall. These findings demonstrate that evidence-based learning within the curriculum is primarily grounded in accessing information, processing evidence and generating inferences based on evidence. While this distribution demonstrates that the curriculum incorporates the fundamental components of evidence-based learning, a more balanced representation of different cognitive skills may further support students' ability to evaluate evidence from multiple perspectives.

The findings obtained in this study are also consistent with previous research in the literature. Several studies have indicated that evidence-based learning processes improve students' abilities to make inferences, reason and form opinions (Bekret, 2019; Malbeleği, 2022). In addition, evidence-based learning has been emphasized as having the potential to improve comparison skills, information transfer and higher-order thinking skills (Sağlam & Bilgiç, 2018). It has also been suggested that learning processes based on the comparison of different forms of evidence and historical inquiry support students' higher-order thinking skills (Doğan, 2008; Aytekin, Sağlam, & Aktın, 2022). The literature further indicates that evidence-based learning contributes to the development of higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation, interpretation and problem solving (Ginesar, 2022; Kabapınar & Başpınar, 2023). Similarly, practices based on historical inquiry are reported to have positive effects on students' historical thinking skills (Işık, 2008). Moreover, the use of primary sources in instructional processes has been found to support students' analysis, evaluation, and creation skills (Patterson, Lucas, & Kithinji, 2012). Taken together, these findings suggest that the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum reflects the fundamental principles of evidence-based learning identified in the literature by emphasizing reasoning, inference, and historical inquiry. However, the comparatively limited representation of higher-order cognitive skills indicates that the curriculum has not yet fully realized the broader pedagogical potential of evidence-based learning, particularly regarding critical evaluation, argumentation, and the use of multiple evidence sources. This finding contributes to the theoretical

discussion by demonstrating how evidence-based learning is translated from an instructional approach into curriculum design.

In this study, when the learning outcomes and process components included in the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum were evaluated in terms of evidence types, it was revealed that evidence-based learning was predominantly structured around historical and written sources (historical documents, texts, archival records, and textbook content). This finding demonstrates that a text-based approach is prioritized in students' access to information. The limited use of multiple forms of evidence indicates that students' abilities to compare, relate, and evaluate different types of evidence multidimensionally are supported only to a limited extent. In addition, the decline in observation- and experience-based evidence, as well as visual, auditory and digital evidence, toward higher grade levels suggests that direct experience and alternative forms of evidence remain in the background within the learning process. The findings indicate that evidence-based learning in the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum is approached through a relatively limited and text-oriented perspective rather than through extensive multiple evidence use.

The literature emphasizes that visual and diverse forms of evidence support students' abilities related to information transfer, meaning-making, historical thinking, and inquiry (Sağlam & Bilgiç, 2018; Kurt, 2021; Tavacı & Sarıçam, 2021). It is also stated that primary school students can access information more easily through visual evidence than through written evidence (Sağlam & Bilgiç, 2018). Nevertheless, written evidence-based activities have also been shown to create meaningful differences in favor of students (Doğan, 2007). When the findings are evaluated collectively, it can be concluded that evidence-based learning occupies a significant place within the learning outcomes and process components of the 2024 Social Studies Curriculum; however, in terms of skill distributions and evidence types, it displays a differentiated and non-holistic structure across grade levels. From this perspective, the study demonstrates that evidence-based learning can serve not only as an instructional approach but also as an analytical framework for examining the cognitive organization of social studies curricula. The findings also have important implications for curriculum development and classroom practice. From a curriculum development perspective, a more balanced distribution of evidence-based learning outcomes across learning domains and grade levels may strengthen the continuity of students' cognitive development. In addition, increasing opportunities for the use of visual, oral, digital, and experiential evidence could promote richer learning experiences by enabling students to compare, evaluate, and interpret evidence from multiple perspectives. These findings may also provide guidance for curriculum developers, textbook authors, and teacher educators in designing instructional materials and learning activities that foster evidence-based thinking. Beyond evaluating the current curriculum, this study provides a conceptual framework that may guide future curriculum revisions and further research on the integration of evidence-based learning into social studies education.

Based on the findings obtained from the study, several recommendations were developed. More learning outcomes related to higher-order cognitive skills such as critical thinking, inquiry, comparison, and analysis may be included in the Social Studies Curriculum. Different forms of evidence, including visual, digital, oral and experience-based evidence, may be represented more balancedly within learning outcomes and process components. Skills associated with evidence-based learning may be organized within a more holistic and progressive structure across grade levels. Learning domains in which evidence-based learning is represented only to a limited extent may be strengthened. Greater emphasis may also be placed on practices that enable students to interact directly with different forms of evidence during instructional processes.

Additional Declaration

Author Contributions

The study was conducted by a single author. All stages of the research, including the development of the research idea, data analysis, writing, and proofreading processes, were carried out by the author.

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Responsible Artificial Intelligence Statement

In this study, artificial intelligence tools were used during the language editing stage. The artificial intelligence tool was used to correct language errors and improve academic language use. The author declares full responsibility for any issues that may arise from the content produced with the support of artificial intelligence.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to the publication of this study.

Ethics Approval

In all processes of this study, the principles of Pen Academic Publishing Research Ethics Policy were followed. This study does not require ethics committee approval, as it is based on document analysis and does not involve any direct application on human or animal subjects.

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