

PART 2

Alternative Assessment Methods in Social Studies

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1. Introduction

Constructivist learning theory prefers assessment methods that support student learning instead of traditional assessment approach. This approach can be defined as assessments meant for both learning and the learners involved. According to Stiggins (2007), assessment of learning includes not only tracking the students, but also an instructional strategy and learning process that improves student learning. Constructivist learning theory was first applied in the United Kingdom in 1998, and then used as the foundational approach of educational programs in many countries—including the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Spain, Canada, Taiwan, and Israel. In 2004, Turkey adopted this learning method with a piloting phase in 9 cities and then the constructivist learning method became the foundation of educational programs across the country in 2005. The proponents of the constructivist learning method say that constructivist learning activities should have the following characteristics:

1. Learning should be realized by learners and be controlled internally. Therefore, students' self-discipline and metacognitive knowledge should be considered.
2. Learning activities, measurement and evaluation activities, and tools that are used for these purposes should be able to enhance metacognitive skills such as self-analysis, self-reflection, and self-awareness.
3. Students should gain multiple perspectives, and a variety of measurement and

evaluation techniques should be used; students should get experience with self-evaluation (Yurdabakan, 2011: 58).

An assessment method that considers the above mentioned features can be described as assessment for learning. Additionally, Stiggins and Duke (2008) claim that, to create beneficial evaluation, teachers should openly answer the following questions before designing and creating an assessment method.

1. Based on evaluation results, what instructional decisions will be made?
2. Who is going to apply these decisions?
3. Which decisions will help educators to make good decisions?

Answers to these questions will serve as a guide to achieve the goal of accurate assessment and, therefore, assessment for learning will occur. The structuring of constructivist learning theory is learner-centered, liberalistic, individual, and holistic, and prioritizes evaluating the process rather than an end product (Dilaver ve Akyürek Tay, 2008). These properties of constructivist learning theory caused changes in learning and teaching strategies. In addition to this transformation, traditional exam-based assessment methods' observed negative effects and constructivism, an emerging new approach to learning, led to search for alternative teaching and assessment methods that promote deeper learning and studying and supporting high level learning (Tynjala, 1998). Herman (1992) said that educational assessment is an innovation process, where old models are seriously questioned, and new techniques are being developed. Therefore, researchers have become greatly interested in alternative assessment methods (Dochy, Segers ve Sluijsmans, 1999), and many definitions have been explored to describe alternative evaluation.

Alternative assessment is described as the instructional techniques and processes that can be easily integrated into daily classroom and school activities (Hamayan, 1995). As it is described, alternative evaluations are an assessment that can occur during teaching and learning processes in order to provide further learning. Another definition of alternative assessment notes that it is about making decisions regarding the quality of students' responses to questions, and alternative education includes self-tracking as well as providing feedback. The goal of many education systems is easing the transition from feedback to self-tracking (Sadler, 1989), and alternative evaluation serves this goal. According to Tierney, Carter and Desai (1991 cited in Hamayan, 1995), alternative assessment enables students to further develop their skills and abilities. In other words, alternative evaluation provides chances for teachers to see the levels of students' gained skills and abilities, and also the limits of these skills and abilities—all during instructional processes.

Herman, Aschbacher and Winters (1992) noted that the below features are common in alternative forms of assessment:

1. Asking students to do, create, produce, or make something;
2. Noticing high level thinking and problem solving skills;
3. Using meaningful instructional activities;
4. Using real life examples;
5. Understanding that humans are not machines, so humanistic judgements must be made when grading;
6. Requiring new teaching and assessment roles for teachers.

Alternative assessment describes measurement tools that are not used in traditional evaluation methods (Çepni, 2009) and defines measurement tools that assess end products as well as a learning process. In another words, alternative evaluation can be defined as assessment that is not included in traditional evaluation methods and which is usually beneficial for assessing an end product and learning process together, though it also enables one to measure and assess only the product.

Additionally, alternative assessment has some distinctive features. Janich, Liu, and Akrofi (2007) explained these features as consisting of the following:

1. Alternative assessment is situated in the classroom, with teachers making choices in the measures used.
2. Alternative assessment is based on a constructivist view of learning whereby the student, the text, and the context impact learning outcomes.
3. Alternative assessment is predicated on the view that learning processes are equal to, if not greater than, the resulting products.

Based on the above explanations, it is possible to say that alternative evaluation emerged from the constructivist learning view, and assessment strategies which are derived from a framework of constructivist learning theory that includes assessing process, product, or both (Dorn, Madeja ve Sabol, 2004). Alternative assessment provides chances for teachers to consider every student's learning needs and their learning styles, as well as adaptation to instruction, individual tracking of student achievement, the creation of instructional activities that interest and motivate students, and assessment tools designed to enable students to make goal-oriented and objective evaluations so that students progress and advance (Greenstein, 2010). Therefore, developing alternative assessment tools is crucial. Herman, Aschbacher,

and Winters (1992) said that even though alternative evaluation requires one to have new strategies to analyze educational results, the concept of developing alternative evaluation tools is backed up by years of research. That is why developers of high quality tests such as benchmark tests, criterion tests, or performance tests have to follow the below rules, with some variations:

1. Determining the skills and achievement that students will develop;
2. Elaborating upon tasks that students will use to demonstrate their skills and achievement;
3. Determining evaluation criteria and standards for student performance while students are on task;
4. Developing a dependable scaling process;
5. Identifying validity proofs for supporting decisions that are derived from student assessment;
6. Improving educational and instructional programs, the accuracy of evaluation through test results, and the feedback provided to students, parents, and community.

Alternative evaluation tools that are developed based on the above mentioned features serve our goal of assessment and make it possible to evaluate a course. Social Studies courses are some of the courses that can integrate alternative evaluation methods to help us to identify the level of skills and abilities that students have gained. Savage and Armstrong (1996) defined a Social Studies course as a subject which is composed of humanitarian and Social Studies in order to improve citizenship skills. The main goal of the Social Studies subject is becoming an effective citizen, and some features of effective citizen are so described in such a class. In general, these features can be grouped under the title of skills and values. The below list presents the skills for students to gain through the Social Studies subject:

1. Thinking skills,
2. Research skills,
3. Time and chronology skills,
4. Map and globe skills,
5. Communication skills
6. Comprehending change and continuity skills,
7. Interpersonal and intergroup skills,
8. Drawing and interpreting tables, graphs, and diagram skills, and
9. Literacy of digital, financial, and media skills.

The values students aim to gain through social studies are:

1. Patriotism,
2. Justice,
3. Independence,
4. Peace,
5. Freedom,
6. Diligence,
7. Integrity,
8. Tolerance,
9. Hospitality,
10. Respect,
11. Love, and
12. Helpfulness

Significant time is required for students to gain these skills and values, and there is a need for tracking, controlling, and drawing conclusions. It is not possible to determine whether students have gained the intended skills and values, or encountered problems during the instructional activities, when making evaluations through a traditional assessment approach. Therefore, it is necessary to implement alternative assessment since this requires us to assess the process rather than the product. As a matter of fact, in Turkey, the 2005 Social Studies curriculum (as well as 2017 Social Studies curriculum) suggest that an evaluation approach should be in line with the constructivist learning theory evaluation approach through the below articles.

Article 17: Teachers should select assessment tools and methods that are appropriate with chapter structure. Teachers should know that evaluation is a part of instruction and it cannot be apart. Teachers should not evaluate only the learning product, but also learning process. They should use traditional and alternative evaluation strategies together. These assessment strategies and tools are composed of ; observation, performance assignments, interviews, self-evaluation scales, portfolio, projects, poster, multiple choice, matching, fill in the blank, and open ended tests. Teachers should not ask divergent questions that will result students to have divergent thinking when using traditional evaluation methods. Some students may be quiet in group discussions, but can write very good compositions or draw pictures. Some students make good presentation but cannot write it very well. As can be seen that using the variety of evaluation tools will give chances for students to see they have learned. As instructional activities, students should make projects such as pictures, photos, poster, songs, PPT presentations, and maquette. Students should be given chances to present these products to their families and acquaintances (MEB, 2005).

Article 14. Evaluation tools and methods that are appropriate with the structure of the chapter. Not only product but also learning process should also be assessed. Traditional assessment and alternative assessment method should be used together in evaluation (MEB, 2017).

Based on these properties, there are several issues that Social Studies teachers need to be aware of when making evaluations. These issues may be listed as:

- a) Selecting assessment tools based on topics;
- b) Applying evaluation as a part of instructional activities in order for learning to occur;
- c) Not only assessing the product, but also the process;
- d) Using traditional and alternative evaluation methods;
- e) Aiming to improve divergent thinking when using traditional evaluation;
- f) Being able to use a variety of evaluation tools together.

An assessment method which is developed based on the above issues will be in line with constructivism. Consequently, constructivist Social Studies teachers have to implement alternative assessment techniques and traditional assessment methods together, and Social Studies teachers are able to use alternative assessment tools as effectively as they use traditional assessment tools. As a result, Social Studies teachers' opinions of alternative assessment are important. Therefore, the following section covers Social Studies teachers' definitions, problems, and suggestions for using alternative assessment methods. It also includes a discussion of advantages and disadvantages of alternative assessment.

Social Studies Teachers' Opinions About Alternative Assessment

Social Studies teachers generally think that alternative assessment is project-performance evaluation (Tay, 2013). Nitko (1991 cited in Bıçak, 2010) noted that alternative evaluation is also called performance evaluation, but that they do not mean the same thing. Gitomer and Duschell's (1997) definition of alternative evaluation, an evaluation that aims to assess performance, is similar to Social Studies teachers' definition of the same. Moreover, previous research (Bal, 2009; Yalçinkaya, 2009; Adanalı and Doğanay, 2010; Toptaş, 2011; Aydoğmuş and Coşkun Keskin, 2012) has shown that teachers have most commonly used project and performance based assignments. It is possible to conclude that Social Studies teachers define alternative evaluation as "project-performance evaluation" since project and performance assignments are the most commonly used alternative evaluation methods. Additionally, since performance based assessment is a kind of alternative evaluation (Wei ve Pecheone, 2010), it also supports Social Studies teachers using the term "project-performance evaluation" when defining alternative assessment.

According to Social Studies teachers, alternative assessment is “step by step evaluation,” “determining student performance and tracking their progress,” and “controlling the process of a task in a certain period” (Tay, 2013). Based on these descriptions, Social Studies teachers describe alternative evaluation as: assessing learning activities in a process, controlling the learning in predetermined points, and evaluating the product as well as the process. These descriptions of alternative assessment point out assessing the process. For example, Hamayan (1995) defined alternative evaluation as consisting of instructional methods and processes that can easily be integrated into classrooms or schools’ daily activities. Dorn, Madeja, and Sabol’s (2004) description of alternative evaluation covers assessing the process, product, or both. Birgin (2008) also pointed out that alternative evaluation forms should serve for assessing student learning, determining shortcomings during learning, and tracking student progress. Bahar, Nartgün, Durmuş, and Bıçak (2010) said “multiple answers, strategies and constructed processes are assessed, authorized, and rewarded by teachers” in describing alternative evaluation, and this description implies that alternative evaluation includes assessing the process and controlling the process, as teachers also expressed. Based on the above mentioned explanations, it is possible to conclude that Social Studies teachers’ descriptions of alternative evaluation match up with descriptions in the literature.

Social Studies teachers have also defined alternative evaluation as “student socialization” and as “not only acquiring knowledge but also using the knowledge” (Tay, 2013). This definition may be connected with the general framework of a project and performance evaluation, which are methods of alternative measurement and evaluation. Furthermore, Çalışkan and Yiğittir (2015) said that while a product is assessed, the main focus is evaluating the performance during the process in performance-based assessment, and performance-based assessment is more relevant to real life and student-centered when compared to traditional measurement and evaluation. Moreover, performance-based evaluations fulfill a task of preparing students for real life if they are designed with consideration for real life problems and solutions. On the other hand, project based evaluation encourages students to participate in group study and collaborative learning activities. Group study and collaboration activities have a significant effect on student socialization. Furthermore, Ada, Baysal, and Kadioğlu (2009) claimed that project based evaluation encourages active student participation, includes high level thinking activities, supports the use of a variety of tools and resources, deals with social and life skills together, and points out the use of technology as a learning tool. These definitions of alternative evaluation in literature match up with teachers’ descriptions of alternative evaluation as “student socialization” and as “not only acquiring knowledge but also using the knowledge.”

Literature indicates that teachers, including Social Studies teachers, know more or less alternative evaluation, think that it is important, but they have some problems with it (Jonson, 1999; Kleinert, Kennedy ve Kearns, 1999; Cheng, 2006; Şaşmaz Ören ve Tatar, 2007; Şimşek, 2011; Yeşilyurt, 2012). However, Corcoran, Dershimer, and Tichenor (2004) said that even though many educators agree on the importance of using at least one kind of alternative (otantic) evaluation in classrooms, they also mention that applying an alternative evaluation technique is difficult.

Social Studies teachers categorized the problems with applying alternative evaluation strategies and solutions to solve problems into four main types: system, teacher-student, school, and parents. Table 1 shows the problems and solutions offered for problems of using alternative evaluation methods in classrooms (Tay, 2013).

Table 1

Problems and solutions offered for using alternative evaluation methods

Problems	Solution Offers
<i>System related</i>	<i>System related</i>
Examination system	Reforming the exam system
Principals interfering to change grades in the system	National Ministry of Education (MEB) should oversee grades and control the system Educating principals on alternative education
Limited hours of Social Studies courses	Increasing the number of Social Studies courses
Practice exams	Conducting practice exams out of class
Performance assignments' lack of direct effect on academic achievement	Accounting performance assignments grades in academic achievement
<i>Teacher and student related</i>	<i>Teacher and student related</i>
Teachers' lack of information	Providing professional development courses for teachers
Additional burdens on teachers	Teachers should work in the school all day long
Difficulty of composing project/performance groups	
Not being able to create measurement-evaluation tools	
Students' tendencies toward easier tasks	
Students' lack of interest	Creating teacher-student collaboration
Requirement of doing homework for every course	
Time problem for students	
<i>School related</i>	<i>School related</i>
Schools' physical structure	Improving schools' infrastructures
Lack of Social Studies laboratories	
Crowded classrooms	Reducing the number of students in a classroom
<i>Parents related</i>	<i>Parents related</i>
Lack of interest and knowledge of parents	Educating the parents
Parental expectations	
Project and performance assignments being done by parents	
Additional costs for parents	
Socio-economic status of parents	

Having limited numbers of Social Studies courses is a system-related problem. The research regarding problems that teachers encounter when using alternative evaluation methods shows that the main issues are time related, and they are described as: limited number of courses, lack of time, and not having enough time (Tomal ve Şenol, 2007; Şaşmaz Ören ve Tatar, 2007; Duban ve Küçükylmaz, 2008; Yalçınkaya, 2009; Karakuş, 2010; Şimşek, 2011; Yeşilyurt, 2012; Aydoğmuş ve Coşkun-Keskin, 2012).

Another problem that Social Studies teachers face is the existing standardized exam system. Tomal and Şenol (2007), Karakuş (2010), and Aktürk (2012) found that standardized exams are crucial problems in integrating alternative evaluation strategies. Social Studies teachers express the issue that standardized exams and problems related to these exams—such as principals' interfere to change student grades in the system and practice exams—are some of the important problems that they face when designing alternative assessment tools. Another problem that prevents teachers from integrating performance-based evaluation is a lack of any direct impact on students' academic achievement (Tay, 2013)

Social Studies teachers have expressed that the main teacher-student related issue related to not being able to use alternative evaluation is teachers' lack of knowledge about alternative assessment. Literature also confirms teachers' lack of knowledge on integrating alternative evaluation (Duban ve Küçükylmaz, 2008; Çepni, 2009; Bal, 2009; Ataman ve Kabapınar, 2012; Tuncer ve Yılmaz, 2012). Hambleton and Murphy (1992) maintained that if teachers do not have knowledge and skills related to alternative evaluation, they will face problems when integrating such assessment strategies in a classroom environment.

Causing extra work for teachers is another problem that teachers encounter with alternative evaluation. This problem can be explained by the disadvantage of project-based assessment, which brings up extra work and additional responsibilities for teachers (Çalışkan ve Yiğittir, 2015).

The literature (Şaşmaz Ören ve Tatar, 2007; Yalçınkaya, 2009; Şimşek, 2011; Aydoğmuş ve Coşkun-Keskin, 2012; Aktürk, 2012; Ataman ve Kabapınar, 2012) supports Social Studies teachers in defining teacher-student related problems when using alternative evaluation: “causing additional work to teachers, difficulty of composing project/performance groups, not being able to create measurement-evaluation tools, students' tendency for easier tasks, students' lack of interest, requirement of doing homework for every course, and students' time problems.”

Social Studies teachers identified having crowded classrooms as a school-related problem that prevents their using alternative evaluation methods. The research (Yalçınkaya, 2009; Şimşek, 2011; Yeşilyurt, 2012; Tuncer and Yılmaz, 2012; Aydoğmuş and Coşkun-

Keskin, 2012; Aktürk, 2012) has shown that this is one of the most common problems—to have crowded classrooms not only for Social Studies teachers, but also for teachers of other subjects.

Parent-related problems have been identified as: “parents’ lack of knowledge and interest, parents’ expectations, project and performance assignments are done by parents instead of students, causing additional costs for parents, and parents’ socio economic statuses” (Tay, 2013). Social Studies teachers’ having the problem of uninterested parents has also been identified in other studies by Yalçınkaya (2009), Şimşek (2011), and Aktürk (2012).

Alternative evaluation methods that can be used in Social Studies courses include:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| a) Performance based evaluation, | j) Attitude scales, |
| b) Portfolio, | k) Self evaluation, |
| c) Project based evaluation, | l) Peer evaluation, |
| d) Rubrics, | m) Group evaluation, |
| e) Check lists, | n) Interview, |
| f) Concept maps, | o) Constructed grid, |
| g) Rating scales, | p) Diagnostic tree, and |
| h) Observation forms, | q) Word association tests. |
| i) Oral presentations, | |

Research has shown that performance based evaluation, portfolios, project based evaluation, check lists, concept maps, oral presentations, and interview assessment methods are the most commonly used alternative evaluation methods (Adanalı and Doğanay, 2010; Aydoğmuş and Coşkun-Keskin, 2012; Yeşilyurt, 2012; Kaya, Balay, and Göçen, 2012). On the other hand, rubrics, rating scales, observation forms, attitude scales, self evaluations, peer evaluations, group evaluations, constructed grids, diagnostic trees, and Word association tests are either rarely used or never used (Aydoğmuş and Coşkun-Keskin, 2012; Yeşilyurt, 2012; Kaya, Balay ve Göçen, 2012).

Alternative evaluation provides many advantages. These advantages include:

- a) Reducing the burden on students,
- b) Results of permanent learning

- c) Enhancing student research skills,
- d) Helping students to reach the information by themselves
- e) Students improving their skills in self-expression,
- f) Learning by doing,
- g) Improving creativity,
- h) Increasing productivity,
- i) Enabling students to discover skills,
- j) Helping teachers to better know students,
- k) Providing self-control for students,
- l) Developing new skills,
- m) Helping students to gain self-confidence,
- n) Helping students better manage their time,
- o) Helping students gain socialization skills,
- p) Helping students gain communication skills, and
- q) Helping students to become active.

Looking at the advantages of alternative assessment, it can be observed that these advantages apply to both teachers and students, and that these advantages mostly point out improving skills. Besides the above listed advantages, however, there are also some disadvantages of using alternative evaluation which should be noted. According to Social Studies teachers, disadvantages of alternative assessment include:

- a) Causes extra work for teachers,
- b) Results in time issues,
- c) Costs too much,
- d) Increases test anxiety,
- e) It is hard to store all the student projects and products
- f) Lack of resources, and
- g) Increases paperwork

The disadvantages that have been identified by Social Studies teacher coincide with the problems that are faced when integrating alternative assessment methods. We can conclude that Social Studies teachers categorize the disadvantages of alternative evaluation as system-based, teacher-student related, school-related, and parents-related.

Results

Alternative evaluation has been increasingly used since 1980 as a reflection of constructivist learning theory, and it refers to non-traditional measurement methods. Its approach is one of evaluating the process in general. Alternative assessment has emerged as a result of traditional assessment methods only assessing products being insufficient for answering the needs of contemporary educational approaches. Current Social Studies courses prioritize teaching and the learning of skills and values, which requires a use of alternative evaluation approaches. Therefore, Social Studies teachers need to be equipped with alternative evaluation skills and experiences.

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