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## Examination of Postgraduate Theses on History Textbooks in Turkey in Terms of Some Variables

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to examine the postgraduate theses that focused on history textbooks between 1989 and 2017 in Turkey. The population was composed of 126 postgraduate theses (master's and doctoral) which were obtained from Thesis Center of Higher Education Council (HEC), Republic of Turkey. The document review method was used to evaluate the theses in the study. Thesis analysis form, which was developed by the researcher, was used as the data collection tool. This form involved items related to the theses' levels, years, universities and institutes, title of the advisors, focus countries, and research design. The findings were interpreted making use of percentages and frequencies. The results showed that some universities in Turkey such as Gazi University distinguished themselves in terms of the number of theses on history textbooks. The fact that there were 108 master's theses and 18 doctoral theses raises the importance of the current study. As a result of this study, discussion and some recommendations were presented about the theses on history textbooks.

**Keywords:** *Doctorate, postgraduate education, history textbooks, thesis, master's degree.*

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### Introduction

Being the written source of conveying knowledge to the students in a classroom environment, textbooks maintain their indispensability despite the changing and advancing technology (Altun, 2013). Among these textbooks, history textbooks have a significant place because history itself is important due to being a tool to transform the society based on the political power's ideological tendency (Yazici&Yildirim, 2018; Behar, 2008; Ozturk, 2003; Hayta & Karabag, 2003). Therefore, history textbooks, one of the main tools of history education, has always become a research topic whether academically or not in every period.

Starting in 1914 and causing a devastation around the world, World War I brought the history education and the role of history textbooks up for international discussion. As argued by Bertrand Russell, the reason of chauvinism in Europe was the approach in history education and the language used in the textbooks. This situation will cause another disaster for the world. He argued that the histories of countries should be written by an international commission composed of members from different countries free of any sort of prejudice in order to prevent this disaster (Ata, 2016). Thus, "International Committee on Intellectual Co-Operation (ICIC)", which was founded within the body of League of Nations aiming at keeping the world peace after World War I, started to examine the history textbooks of countries in order to prevent the nations adverse discourses and prejudices against each other (Pingel, 2010). However, World War I's lasting political and economic causes brought the world to the brink of a new war.

When the League of Nations weren't able to prevent the World War II in 1939, it lost its function and the efforts to bring peaceful discourse to the textbooks were interrupted. In Germany and Italy, where the Nazism and Fascism were in power, the valor discourse of governments reflected especially on history textbooks. The textbooks served well to the governments at schools where the political power designed the society and alienate the "other" (Giorgetti, 2016; Stathis, 2014; McLaren, 2011). However, this valor discourse and alienation resulted in adverse consequences for both Europe and the world. Upon the World War II, "United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)" was founded under the body of "United Nations (UN)", which was founded in 1945 to keep the world peace.

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UNESCO started to conduct and support studies that examining the textbooks and spread a peaceful approach (Elban, 2017; Koullapis, 2008; King, 2005). Similarly, "Council of Europe (CE)", which was founded in 1949, supported these kinds of activities.

As a result of the efforts made by the international organizations founded after the World War II, the issues such as the language and hate discourse used in history education, teaching, learning, textbooks began to be examined, and some solutions were offered. Historian Georg Eckert, who was an academic at Braunschweig University, president of UNESCO German Commission, and a supporter of UNESCO's works, founded the "International Institute for the Improvement of Textbooks" in 1951. Changing its name as "Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research (GEI)" in 1975, this organization continues its studies on textbooks. Moreover, "European Association of History Educator (EUROCLIO)" was founded under the body of "Council of Europe (CE)" in 1992 and supported the activities similar to UNESCO of UN. This association conducts studies on history education and teaching in cooperation with different countries, especially European countries.

This European-centered peaceful approach had an impact in Turkey. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Educational Board in 1943, Sadrettin Celal Antel put the "Peaceful History Education suggested by "ICIC" on the agenda. However, that period's conditions caused an insufficient support for this approach (TCMV, 1943). Although Turkey joined both "UN" and "CE" after the World War II and made some efforts within the scope of developing relations with the West, academic and critical studies in a real sense were conducted during the 1990s.

In 1991, "Turkish Economic and Social History Foundation" was founded and changed its name to "History Foundation" in 2005. This foundation has publications with the contributions from national and international researchers and organize symposiums and congresses on history education (Turan, 2016). History Foundation carries out joint projects with UNESCO and EUROCLIO. Between 29 September and 1 October 1994, International Buca Symposium with the theme of "History Education and Textbooks" was carried out with contributions of researchers from Dokuz Eylul University and especially Prof. Dr. Salih Ozbaran. The presentations were about the issues such as power and history, history and history education, the role of history textbooks in education and instruction, and the political function of history textbooks, and these presentations were published in a book after the symposium. In 2009, "History Educators' Union Foundation" was founded under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Mustafa Safran, an academic working at Gazi University. Supported by national and international researchers, this foundation has been carrying out joint projects with international foundations such as UNESCO and EUROCLIO. The foundation organizes the "International Symposium on History Education (ISHE)" in a city of Turkey biennially. The presentations have been published in books after the symposium.

As can be seen, history textbooks are a significant theme for the national and international studies on history education. At this point, postgraduate theses become important because they aim at presenting scientific solutions to the missing parts and problems in literature. They contribute to the field within the context of findings and results. They also serve as a guide to other researchers. Within this context, the postgraduate theses on history education in Turkish universities were examined in terms of some variables.

According to the data of HEC Thesis Center, the first postgraduate thesis on history textbooks in Turkey was a master's thesis conducted in Istanbul University in 1989. Similar theses on history textbooks followed the first one in the subsequent process. In this study aiming at making contributions for national and international researchers studying in this field, postgraduate theses on history textbooks were examined in terms of the distribution of their levels, accepted years, universities, institutes, titles of supervisors, focus countries, and research designs.

### Methodology

Document analysis method was used in this qualitative study. The written and visual materials are used in qualitative studies when direct observations and interviews aren't possible. Therefore, document analysis/review can be a research method by itself (Karasar, 2017; Yildirim & Simsek, 2016). The method of document analysis requires the necessary resources to obtain the data, and to analyze and interpret these data provides. The steps involved in the document analysis process are: accessing the documents, confirming the originality, understanding the documents, analyzing the data, using the data (Yildirim&Simsek, 2016; Bowen, 2009).

The population was composed of postgraduate theses (master's and doctoral) on history textbooks in Turkey. A total of 126 postgraduate theses were involved in the study, which were found after searching the keywords of "textbooks", "history textbooks", "history books", "textbook", "history textbook", and "history book" in the database of HEC Thesis Center. Within this context, the first search was made on 14.10.2017. Later on, the same keywords were searched from time to time to keep the dataset up-to-date. The final search was made on 11.01.2018. The findings obtained from the document analysis were presented in Tables using frequency and percentage (Merriam, 2009).

## Findings / Results

In this study, a total of 126 postgraduate theses written in 32 different state and private universities in Turkey was examined. The findings related to the levels of theses, the university in which they were written, the year when they were accepted, the institute in which they were accepted, the title of supervisors of the theses, the focus country in the theses, and the research design of the theses were presented under the related headings.

### *Postgraduate Theses in terms of their Levels*

There are a variety of types and levels of theses such as master's, doctoral, proficiency in art, specialization in medicine, specialization in dentistry, and specialization in medicine minor in higher education institutions in Turkey. The theses on history textbooks are conducted in master's and doctoral levels.

*Table 1. Distribution of Postgraduate These in terms of their Levels*

<b>Thesis Level</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Master's	108	85,6
Doctoral	18	14,4
Total	126	100

As can be seen in Table 1, of 126 postgraduate theses on history textbooks, 126 (85.6%) were at master's level while 18 (14.4%) were at doctoral level. The small number of doctoral theses on history textbooks is remarkable when compared with the high number of master's theses. However, the experience and knowledge gained at master's level could be enhanced at doctoral level and the original knowledge and findings could contribute to the field. Below is a list of researchers who carried their experience and knowledge that were gained at master's level to the doctoral level:

- Following his master's thesis titled as "Study of Ottoman Social History in High School Textbooks in the Context of Divorce in Classical Age Ottoman Society" in Dokuz Eylul University in 2003, Yahya Araz defended his doctoral thesis titled as "Problem of the Other in High School History Textbooks in the Context of Muslim Non-Muslim Relationships in Classical Age Ottoman Society" in the same university in 2008.
- Following her master's thesis titled as "Historical Understanding in History Lesson Books between the Period of 1930 and 1950" in Marmara University in 2005, Kibar Aktin defended her doctoral thesis titled as "Social Science/History Education in the United States of America, England and Turkey are Perspective Constructive in History Text Books, World War II Examples" in the same university in 2010.
- Following his master's thesis titled as "The Teaching of the Armenian Issue in the Revolution History of the Turkish Republic and Kemalism Courses (a design of a new unit under the lights of existing course books, teacher and student views and contemporary public)" in Gazi University in 2007, Erhan Metin defended his doctoral thesis titled as "History Education and Language: Historical Language Use of History Course Book Writers, Historians, History Teachers, and Students" in Ataturk University in 2011.
- Following her master's thesis titled as "Perceptions of History Teachers about Visual Materials of 9<sup>th</sup> Grade History Textbooks" in Karadeniz Technical University in 2011, Ebru Demircioglu defended her doctoral thesis titled as "Views of Turkish History Teachers about Text and Visual Materials of 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Grades Turkish History Textbooks in terms of Gender Representation: Example of Trabzon" in Ataturk University in 2014.

### *Postgraduate Theses in terms of Acceptation Years*

The first postgraduate thesis on history textbooks was accepted in 1989 after the foundation of HEC. Within this context, the yearly distribution of theses between 1989 and 2017 can be seen in Table below:

Table 2. Yearly Distribution of Postgraduate Theses in terms of Acceptation

Year	Master's		Doctoral	
	f	%	f	%
1989	1	0,9	-	-
1993	-	-	1	5,6
1996	2	1,8	-	-
1997	1	0,9	-	-
1998	5	4,6	-	-
1999	2	1,8	-	-
2000	1	0,9	-	-
2001	2	1,8	-	-
2002	2	1,8	-	-
2003	5	4,6	-	-
2004	3	2,8	-	-
2005	12	11,1	1	5,6
2006	10	9,3	-	-
2007	7	6,5	-	-
2008	10	9,3	3	16,6
2009	8	7,4	1	5,6
2010	5	4,6	1	5,6
2011	9	8,3	1	5,6
2012	6	5,6	1	5,6
2013	3	2,8	1	5,6
2014	3	2,8	3	16,6
2015	3	2,8	2	11,1
2016	6	5,6	2	11,1
2017	2	1,8	1	5,6
Total	108	100	18	100

As can be seen in Table 2, the first postgraduate thesis on history textbooks in Turkey was at master's level in 1989<sup>†</sup>. On the other hand, it can be observed that the yearly distribution of master's theses on history textbook is not steady. There are increases in the number of master's theses in some years while there are decreases in some years. There was no thesis in some years. After the first master's thesis in 1989, there was no other master's thesis until 1996. Since 1996, it was observed that at least one master's thesis has been written on history textbooks each year. On the other hand, the highest number of master's thesis was 12 (11,1%) in 2005.

The first doctoral thesis on history textbook was accepted in 1993<sup>‡</sup>. Apart from that, there had been no doctoral thesis until 2005. Since 2005, at least one doctoral thesis (5.6%) was accepted each year. The highest number of doctoral theses per year was 3 (16.6%) in 2008 and 2014.

#### *Postgraduate Theses in terms of Universities*

There are a total of 165 universities in Turkey by 2017, 108 of which are state universities while 57 private universities. Only 32 of them (28 state and 4 private universities) involved postgraduate theses on history textbooks. The distribution of theses in terms of universities is in Table 3.

<sup>†</sup> This master's thesis was defended by Murat Polat at Istanbul University Social Sciences Institute in 1989 and titled as "The Content and Effects of History Textbooks in Political Socialization (Content Analysis of Revolution History Textbooks)".

<sup>‡</sup> This doctoral thesis was defended by Nuri Dogan at Istanbul University Social Sciences Institute in 1993 and titled as "Primary and Secondary Schools' Textbooks and Socialization (1876-1918)".

Table 3. Distribution of Postgraduate Theses in terms of Universities

University	Master's		Doctoral	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Akdeniz	1	0,9	-	-
Ankara	4	3,7	-	-
Ataturk	1	0,9	3	16,6
Balikesir	2	1,9	-	-
Bogazici	1	0,9	3	16,6
Cumhuriyet	2	1,9	-	-
Cankiri	1	0,9	-	-
Canakkale Onsekiz Mart	6	5,6	-	-
Cukurova	1	0,9	-	-
Dicle	1	0,9	1	5,6
Dokuz Eylul	5	4,6	2	11,1
Gazi	20	18,5	2	11,1
Gaziosmanpasa	1	0,9	-	-
Hacettepe	4	3,7	1	5,6
Ihsan Dogramaci Bilkent	1	0,9	-	-
Istanbul	8	7,5	1	5,6
Istanbul Bilgi	1	0,9	-	-
Izmir Ekonomi	1	0,9	-	-
Kahramanmaras Sutcu Imam	1	0,9	-	-
Kafkas	1	0,9	-	-
Karadeniz Teknik	3	2,8	-	-
Marmara	15	13,9	2	11,1
Mehmet Akif Ersoy	1	0,9	-	-
Mersin	1	0,9	-	-
Mimar Sinan Guzel Sanatlar	1	0,9	-	-
Necmettin Erbakan	1	0,9	-	-
Ortadogu Teknik	1	0,9	1	5,6
Sabanci	2	1,9	1	5,6
Sakarya	3	2,8	-	-
Selcuk	8	7,5	-	-
Yildiz Teknik	6	5,6	1	5,6
Yuzuncu Yil	3	2,8	-	-
Total	108	100	18	100

As can be seen in Table 3, a total of 108 master's theses on history textbooks were prepared in 32 universities in Turkey. Among these universities, Gazi University, one of the rooted universities in Turkey, involved 20 theses (18.5%). Marmara University followed in with 15 theses (13.9%). 19 doctoral theses were prepared in 11 different universities. Ataturk and Bogazici Universities involved 3 theses (16.6%) each.

#### *Postgraduate Theses in terms of Institutes*

The postgraduate theses in Turkey are monitored, approved, and accepted by institutes of universities. Then, they are opened to access at HEC Thesis Center after the approval of the author. There are a variety of institutes under different names in Turkey. The theses on history textbooks were observed to be approved by the Institute of Social Sciences, Educational Sciences, Ataturk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution, Middle East Studies, and Turkic Studies.

Table 4. Distribution of Postgraduate Theses in terms of Institutes

Institute	Master's		Doctoral	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Social Sciences	61	56,5	9	50
Educational Sciences	39	36,1	8	44,4
Ataturk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution	4	3,7	1	5,6
Middle East Studies	3	2,8	-	-
Turkic Studies	1	0,9	-	-
Total	108	100	18	100

As can be seen in Table 4, 61 master's theses (56.5%) were approved by institutes of social sciences. A similar pattern can be seen at doctoral level. Institutes of social sciences had the highest number of doctoral theses as they did at master's level. A total of 9 doctoral theses (50%) were approved by institutes of social sciences. This situation can be explained by that all of the universities in Turkey embody institutes of social sciences. Institutes of educational sciences are located in every university. Only the rooted and old universities such as Gazi and Marmara Universities embody the institutes of educational sciences.

#### *Postgraduate Theses in terms of Supervisors' Titles*

A doctoral degree is required in Turkish universities to be able to supervise postgraduate theses. The titles such as Doctor (Dr.), Assistant Professor Doctor (Asst. Prof. Dr.), Associate Professor Doctor (Assoc. Prof. Dr.), and Professor Doctor (Prof. Dr.) are earned by the academics based on their studies, degrees, and experiences.

*Table 5. Distribution of Postgraduate Theses in terms of Supervisors' Titles*

Title	Master's		Doctoral	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Prof. Dr.	33	30,6	10	55,6
Assoc. Prof. Dr.	34	31,5	6	33,3
Asst. Prof. Dr.	40	37	2	11,1
Dr.	1	0,9	-	-
Total	108	100	18	100

As can be seen in Table 5, of 108 master's theses, 33 (30.6%) were supervised by Professor Doctors, 34 (31.5%) were supervised by Assoc. Prof. Doctors, 40 (37%) were supervised by Asst. Prof. Doctors, and 1 (0.9%) was supervised by doctor. Of 18 doctoral theses, 10 (55.6%) were supervised by Prof. Doctors, 6 (33.3%) were supervised by Assoc. Prof. Doctors, and 2 (11.1%) were supervised by Asst. Prof. Doctors.

#### *Postgraduate Theses in terms of Focus Countries*

The postgraduate theses were examined in terms of the focus countries under the categories of Turkey, foreign country, and Turkey-foreign country.

*Table 6. Distribution of Postgraduate Theses in terms of Focus Countries*

Country	Master's		Doctoral	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Turkey	78	72,2	15	83,3
Foreign Country	24	22,2	1	5,6
Turkey-Foreign Country	6	5,6	2	11,1
Total	108	100	18	100

As can be seen in Table 6, of all the master's theses, 78 (72.2%) focused on history textbooks in Turkey. 24 (22.2%) focused on history textbooks in foreign countries. 6 (5.6%) focused on comparing textbooks in Turkey with those in foreign countries in terms of some variables. Similarly, of all the doctoral theses, 15 (83.3%) focused on textbooks in Turkey. 1 (5.6%) focused on textbooks in foreign countries. 2 (11.1%) focused on comparing textbooks in Turkey with those in foreign countries in terms of some variables.

Postgraduate theses focusing on textbooks in Turkey took the textbooks that had been used or were being used at schools as the population or sample, while the theses focusing on textbooks in foreign countries and comparing textbooks in Turkey with those in foreign countries took the current textbooks as the population or sample. The reason behind this situation is the easy access to the textbooks that were used and removed afterwards, to the curriculums prepared by Ministry of National Education, and decisions of Board of Education and Discipline in Turkey. On the other hand, postgraduate theses concentrated on issues such as identity, the other, and image. It was observed that these topics were focused more in theses making international comparisons.

#### *Postgraduate Theses in terms of Research Design*

When the research designs used in postgraduate theses on history textbooks were examined, it was observed that both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Some of them used these methods at the same time.

Table 7. Distribution of Postgraduate Theses in terms of Research Design

Method	Master's		Doctoral	
	f	%	f	%
Qualitative (Document analysis etc.)	88	81,5	16	88,9
Quantitative (Questionnaire, Scale etc.)	14	12,9	-	-
Qualitative-Quantitative (Document analysis, descriptive analysis, scale, questionnaire, etc.)	6	5,6	2	11,1
Total	108	100	18	100

As can be seen in Table 7, of the master's theses, 88 (81.5%) were qualitative, 14 (12.9%) were quantitative, and 6 (5.6%) were qualitative-quantitative studies. Similarly, 16 (88.9%) doctoral theses used qualitative method, and 2 (11.1%) theses used both qualitative and quantitative methods. The reason of high number of qualitative method is that the majority of the theses examined the textbooks that were used in the past. The quantitative and qualitative-quantitative theses focused on the contemporary textbooks. Since these textbooks were in use at the time of the thesis, the teachers and students were administered surveys, and attitude scales were developed.

### Conclusion, Discussion, and Recommendations

In this study, the postgraduate theses on history textbooks in Turkey between 1989 and 2017 were examined. A total of 126 (108 master's and 18 doctoral theses) postgraduate theses were accessed. The theses were examined by creating categories and interpreted. When the history of theses on textbooks over 20 years and the number of universities in Turkey were considered, it can be stated that the number of postgraduate theses on history textbooks is small.

It was observed that the majority of postgraduate theses on history textbooks were at master's level. The number of doctoral theses was lower. The universities that had the highest number of master's theses on textbooks were Gazi and Marmara Universities. Of 108 master's theses, 35 were defended at these two universities. However, this situation is different at doctoral level. Each Ataturk and Bogazici Universities had 3 doctoral theses on history textbooks, which is higher than other universities.

Although the majority of postgraduate theses focused on history textbooks in Turkey, it was observed that the number of theses on textbooks in foreign countries was considerable. A significant point was that the theses examining the history textbooks of foreign countries focused on how the Turkish/Ottoman discourse was handled in those textbooks. Generally, the titles of the theses involved images/perceptions. On the other hand, the foreign countries involved in the theses were mainly the countries that were controlled under the Ottoman rule for some time, and gained their independence. This situation shows that the history textbooks were examined from a narrow viewpoint sourcing from a romantic approach. However, the examination of textbooks in Far East and Africa should be required to be able to view them from a wider perspective.

Another result of this study was that the postgraduate theses on history textbooks were prepared in a rather close period although the first doctoral and master's theses in Turkey were defended in 1959 and 1962, respectively. Considering the preliminary studies on history education were initiated in 1990s by Prof. Dr. Salih Ozbaran and 2000s by Prof. Dr. Mustafa Safran, the reason of small number of postgraduate theses on history textbooks becomes clear. Moreover, other reasons can be listed as history education being a relatively novel field in Turkey, the small number of institutes of educational sciences, and the lack of academics in the field.

Postgraduate theses are the studies which involve literature review related to a field, interpretation of knowledge and documents, and contribute to the field. Thus, they can detect the problems in the field and offer solutions. They guide the researchers that are conducting or will conduct studies in the field. Within this context, more postgraduate theses on history textbooks are required in Turkey. The number of theses especially at doctoral level should be increased because doctoral education is the most important level of postgraduate education. A person preparing a doctoral thesis will provide the field with a unique contribution. The questions such as how a history textbook should be, what it should tell, how much should it tell should be sought answers instead of how the history textbooks are and what they tell. The number of theses involving more teachers, students, and academics should be increased.

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