Extended Summary

Purpose
This research aims to determine the levels of the eight-grade students in the secondary school to understand the economy concepts in the social studies program. To realize this aim, that question was tried to be answered: “What is the level of the eight-grade students in the secondary school to understand the economy concepts in the social studies program?”

Method
This research used the survey model and the qualitative research methods. The study group of the research consisted of 120 eight-grade students from three secondary schools in Çankaya, Altındağ and Sincan Districts of Ankara in 2012–2013 educational years. The reason why we chose the eighth grade students was that those students had learned all the related concepts in the previous grades. The social studies program of the fifth, sixth and seventh grades was used to determine the concepts related to the scale.

20 concepts related to the economy in the social studies program include economy, economic activities, production, distribution, consumption, capital, market, resource, trade, money, saving, investment, importation, exportation, need, wastage, scarcity, entrepreneur, labour, budget. The semi-structured concept scale that consisted of 20 short-answered and open-ended questions and that was prepared by the researchers was used in order to determine the students’ levels to understand the related concepts and their misconceptions.

The questions in the concept scale were designed as ‘1 – What is economy? Explain it.’ ‘2 – What is an economic activity?’ Explain it.’ The responses of the students to the related concepts were evaluated with the descriptive analysis method according to the categories ‘understanding’, ‘limited understanding’, ‘misunderstanding’, ‘couldn’t answer’. The students’ responses were coded into the suitable categories and their levels of understanding were expressed as percentage and frequency. In addition, the findings were supported with the direct citations from the students’ responses on the levels of ‘misunderstanding and ‘limited understanding’.

Results
The study found out that on the students’ level of understanding the concept ‘economy’ the limited understanding was 38.3%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘economic activity’ the limited understanding was 45.8%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘production’ the limited understanding was 60.8%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘distribution’ the misunderstanding was 46.6%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘consumption’ the limited understanding was 65.8%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘capital’ the misunderstanding was 52.5%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘market’ the limited understanding was 79.2%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘resource’ the misunderstanding was 47.5%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘trade’ the limited understanding was 56.7%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘money’ the understanding was 47.5%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘saving’ limited understanding was 59.2%; on their level of understanding
the concept ‘investment’ the misunderstanding was 65%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘importation’ the understanding was 51.7%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘exportation’ the understanding 53.3%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘need’ the understanding was 65.9%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘wastage’ the limited understanding was 45.8%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘scarcity’ the misunderstanding was 39.2%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘entrepreneur’ the limited understanding was 37.5%; on their level of understanding the concept ‘labour’ the limited understanding was 50.8% and on their level of understanding the concept ‘budget’ the limited understanding was 55%.

Conclusion and Discussion
The analysis of the data in the research indicated that the students had misconceptions, especially about distribution, capital, resource, investment and scarcity concepts. It was found out that the students knew economy, economic activity, production, consumption, market, trade, saving, wastage, entrepreneur, labour, and budget concepts in the level of limited understanding. It was also determined that the students knew money, importation, exportation, need concepts in the level of understanding.

The social studies lessons aim to teach the concepts of ‘distribution’, ‘capital’, ‘resource’ and ‘investment’ in the level of reinforcement and the concept of scarcity in the level of improvement (MEB, 2005a; MEB, 2005b). While it is difficult to teach these abstract concepts, the studies in literature showed that these concepts can be taught to students successfully with the economy-based programs. For instance; Kourilsky (1977) found out in his study that the kindergarten students could learn the concepts of scarcity, supply and demand and opportunity cost with the program of child economy. Schug and Hagedorn (2005) taught the concepts of spending, saving and investment to the secondary school–students with the program of Experienced Children in Money.

The research studies show that the students having real life experiences have better learning outcomes (Kourilsky, 1983; Laney, 1989; Littrell, 1999). That the students learned the concepts of money and need in the level of understanding can be thought as a result of the fact that the students use these concepts more frequently in their real life. In addition, the students learned the concepts of exportation and importation in the level of understanding can be thought as a result of the fact that the unit of our world in the fifth grade and the unit of our country and world in the sixth grade were studied in relation to the learning area on Production, Distribution and Consumption. However, in the unit of our country and world in the sixth grade the concept of resource was aimed to be taught in the level of improvement but there weren’t enough examples on this concept (MEB, 2011: 168; MEB, 2012a: 234).

When the results of the study were generally evaluated, it was seen that the students’ levels of understanding the related concepts were in the level of misunderstanding and mostly limited understanding. Therefore, it will be reasonable to look into the concepts in the learning areas on Distribution, Production and Consumption in the social studies course. In addition, the qualifications and the methods of the teachers on teaching economic topics should be studied more.