Opinions of the General Education Teachers on the Adaptations for Students with Special Needs in General Education Classrooms

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the opinions of general education teachers with regard to the instructional adaptations that need to be made for inclusion and to evaluate them against several variables. The study group consists of 126 general education teachers. The opinions of the teachers with regard to the adaptations in their classrooms have been evaluated by the Scale of Instructional Adaptations for Inclusion (SIMI). The SIMI consists of 2 subscales (physical-educational adaptations) and 39 items. The study revealed that teachers consider a majority of the items of the SIMI significant and marked them as "necessary." Also a review of the distribution teachers' responses with emphasis on the educational and physical adaptations reveal that the teachers have marked the physical adaptations more than the educational ones as the instructional adaptations that need to be implemented for inclusion.

Key Words

Inclusion, Instructional Adaptations, General Education Teachers.

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Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Bilimleri / Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice
10 (4) • Autumn 2010 • 2455-2464

Improving reading academic skills of students with special needs in inclusive settings requires using different strategies to a large extent other than using the traditional teaching methods and therefore requires instructional adaptations that are appropriate for the characteristics of children (Friend & Bursuck, 2002; Lewis & Doorlag, 1999; Salend, 1998). Despite these requirements, it is stated that in practice most teachers make few adaptations and in fact throughout the year they are using the traditional instructional method in which teachers are more active in lecturing (Rosenberg, Westling & McLeskey, 2008; Sucuoğlu & Kargın, 2006). The main reason for making adaptations in inclusive settings is to improve the areas in which students with special needs in inclusive settings have difficulties and have them use their performances to the maximum extent possible.

Through the dissemination of inclusion, the arrangement of the schools and classrooms in such a way that will include all students and the approach that shall enable us to response to the individual requirements of the students have been increasingly adopted indeed and it was emphasized that the learning of each children must be supported fully. By this way, it makes essential that the adaptations that will enable each children to learn must be followed (Rosenberg et al., 2008). Apart from educational modification that includes the individualization of education has considered in different titles, the main titles could be stated as follows: (a) physical adaptations, (b) process-oriented adaptations, (c) adaptations towards class climate, (d) educational adaptations, and (e) adaptations about process (Smith, Polloway, Patton & Dowdy, 2008).

Physical Adaptations are arrangements that have been effective for education to establish appropriate environment for learning. Learning could be carried out in the physical environment and it is also affected by the specifications of the physical environment. The temperature of the classroom, quantity of the light, the color of the light, noise level, dimension, accessibility, seating arrangement as well as stimulus effect are the physical specifications which directly affect the students and teachers (Choate, 2000; Lewis & Doorlag, 1999, Smith et al., 2008; Sucuoğlu & Kargın, 2006; Rief & Heimburge, 2006)

Adaptations regarding the process are the arrangement that secondarily we confront with and it expresses what has been done regarding the working of the classroom. These arrangements have mostly intended to determine the expectations of the school and student from each other. A

teacher who wants to make adaptations on process plans and envisages that what will be expected from the students before starting to the school year and these expectations, shall be met for the students at the beginning of the school year. Modification regarding the process includes the determination of the general rules, definition of the rules that shall be applied in the class as well as determination of the classrooms and their working methods (Smith et al., 2008).

Classroom climate is composed of physiological and social specifications of the classroom. These are the behaviors of the students, teachers, other peers as well as families that affect the general acceptance of the students who need special needs. In the classroom which has a positive climate, the students adopt the happier and friendlily attitudes indeed. The teacher shall be a model to build the positive classroom climate for the students. There is no doubt that if the teacher acts in a supportive and responsive manner for all his/her students, it would affect the student's behavior positively. The domestic life, cultural characteristics, their temperaments and their inter-personal relations are essential for building up the class climate. For this reason, it is advised that these characteristics of the teacher be considered (Friend & Bursuck, 2002).

The educational adaptations require that different educational methods be used according to the requirement of the students and teachers and the specification of the taught subject in order to get the targeted knowledge and skills for the students and it also requires to make a decision which kind of training method shall be more effective for the relevant subjects as well. It is the fact that different training methods will provide the effective learning for each student and it will be also helpful for the learning of the students who need special attention. Direct education is involved in the collusive training and learning by discovery that has been taking part among the education methods used in the classrooms (Friend & Bursuck, 2002; Olson & Platt, 2004; Putnam, 1998).

Adaptations regarding the process are to define the responsibilities of the teachers and managers in accordance with the student's requirements for individualization of the training school-wide and also to determine what could be done for the adaptation of the homework assignments (Smith et al., 2008). These adaptations will prevent the individualization policy establishment school-wide and prevent the differences among teachers.

In the literature different research studies to help the teachers understand the inclusion process are listed (Baker & Zigmond, 1995; Calberg & Kavale, 1980; Duhaney & Salend, 2000; Freeman & Aklin, 2000; Gibb et al., 1997; Lindsay, 2003; Manset & Semmel, 1997; Palmer, Fuller, Arora & Nelson, 2001; Pivic, McComas & Laflamme, 2002; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996; Wang & Baker, 1986; York & Tundidor, 1995). Although there are some research studies related inclusion conducted in Turkey, the number is very limited (Batu, 1998; Diken, 1998; Kırcaali-İftar, 1992; Gözün & Yıkmış, 2004; Sucuoğlu, Ünsal & Özokcu, 2004; Uysal, 1995; Varlıer & Vuran, 2006). In inclusive settings, the number of students with special needs educated are increasing. The success of inclusion mostly depends on the teacher to adapt the program with relation to the students needs by using teaching adaptations in their classes.

As a consequence, in Turkey, there is a restricted range of studies that examine the teaching modification skills of teachers working in inclusive settings and there is a need to increase the number of these studies. For this necessity, the problem of this study was the evaluation of the modification skills of the teachers working in inclusive settings.

The purpose of this study was to review the opinions of the general education teachers with regard to the instructional adaptations that need to be made for inclusion, and to evaluate these opinions as compared to several variables.

Participants

The participants consist of 126 general education teachers who work in the province of Ankara during the educational year of 2008-2009. 77% of the teachers are women and 23% of the teachers are men who participated in the research. 32.5% of these teachers are among the age of 24-35 years, 46% of the teachers are among the age of 36-45 years and 20.6% of the teachers are among the age of 46 years. 8% of the teachers did not indicate their ages. 60.3% of the teacher graduated from the faculties of education, 30.2% of them graduated from a faculty other than faculty of education. 9.5% of the teachers did not indicate which university they graduated from. 15.1% of the teachers have been working as a teacher for 0-5 years, 19% of them have been working as a teacher for 6-10 years and 65.9 of them have been also working as a teacher for

more than 11 years. The class size that the teachers trains is composed of 0-20 students at the rate of 11.1%, 21-35 students at the rate of 67.5% and 36 and more at the rate of 5.6% as well. 5.6 % of the teachers did not state the class size. On the other hand, it is stated that 37.3 % of the teachers do not have disabled students, 34.9 % of the teachers stated that there is 1 disabled student in their class and 17.5 of them stated that there is 2 or more than 2 disabled students in the classrooms. 10.3% of the teachers did not give any answer to the question about disabled students in their classrooms. 42.1 % of the teachers have not been participated in any training program towards disabled students and on the other hand, 33.3% of them have attended the in-service training organized by the Ministry of Education and 22.2% of them have attended the training within the scope of private course, seminar, or program as well as 1.6 % of the teachers have participated in post graduate education. 8% of the teachers did not give any answer to the question regarding the training program towards disabled students. 21.4% of the teacher who have participated in the training course towards disabled students have received training between 0-20 hours, 12% of them between 21-40 hours, 6.3 of them have received training more than 40 hours. 17.4 of the teachers who received training did not state about their training time.

Data Collection Tool

"*The Scale of Instructional Adaptations for Inclusion (SIMI)*" which has been developed by the researchers and aims to determine the opinions of the teachers with regard to the instructional adaptations that need to be made for inclusion was used in the study in order to collect data.

The Scale of Instructional Adaptations for Inclusion (SIMI)

The SIMI, which aims to determine what teachers think about the instructional adaptations for inclusion, has been developed by the researchers. The SIMI features two factors, which are: *Educational Adaptations* and *Physical Adaptations*. *Educational Adaptations (EM)* consists of 25 items, and aims to evaluate the opinions of the teachers with regard to the educational adaptations for inclusion. *Physical Adaptations (PM)*, consist of 14 items, aims to evaluate the opinions of the teachers with regard to the *physical adaptations* for inclusion. The SIMI is based on a scale of 1 to 5, and the responses vary between "1-least" and "5-most".

First of all, in order to test the sufficiency of the sample size, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value and Bartlett tests for sphericity have been reviewed. The KMO value has been used as a measurement to give decision if the selected sample data are convenient for the subtraction of the factor or not. If the KMO value is more than .50, it means that we could continue the factor analysis. There is no doubt that how high the rate, it is good to make the data set factor analysis (Kalaycı, 2005). In this analysis, it was determined that the KMO value is 87 (Kalaycı, 2005).

It was also stated that the result of the sphericity test is significant [p=.00]. In the direction of these findings, it was decided that the data set is applicable for performing the factor analysis (Kalaycı, 2005; Şencan, 2005). According to the result of the factor analysis which was performed, the septic and cyclical materials have been delivered under the factors and the final state of the measurement has prepared.

There are two factors in KIDO- SIMI such as the *Educational Adaptations and Physical Adaptations*. As a first factor, the factorial loading values of the articles mentioned under the Educational Adaptations has been changing in the range of .77 and .41 and has consisted of 25 items as well. As a second factor, the factorial loading values of the articles mentioned under the Physical Adaptations has been changing in the range of .77 and .48 and has consisted of 14 items. Both factors on the scale explain the 53% of the variance in total. For the creditableness of the KIDO- SIMI; the Cronbach-Alpha internal consistency factors have been calculated. Also calculated was Cronbach-Alpha values which are .94, the subscale of educational arrangements is .94 and the subscale of the physical arrangement and Cronbach-Alpha factor is .89.

Data Analysis

Data analysis includes an evaluation of whether the responses of general education teachers vary in terms of some personal and occupational characteristics. Collected data were used to make comparisons after a transfer to SPSS for Windows 13.0.

Findings

The study includes the percentages of the teachers' responses in order to identify the distribution of the responses of the teachers to the adap-

tations for inclusion. A review of the distribution of teachers' responses to the SIMI reveals that the teachers consider a majority of the items significant, and acknowledge them to be necessary. Distribution review also reveals that the teachers accept the physical adaptations more than the educational adaptations. With a collective review of all findings from the study, the opinions of the teachers, who have participated in the study, with regard to the educational adaptations for the students with special needs in their classes are variables that create a significant difference depending on the class population and the gender; but the gender, the presence of a student with special needs in the class and any specific step towards the education of these students are among the variables that create a significant difference for the physical adaptations.

Discussion

A review of the distribution of teachers' responses as compared to the aspects of educational and physical adaptations reveals that the teachers consider the physical adaptations to be more important as compared to educational adaptations. This finding is also consistent with the literature. It is explained in the literature that the physical adaptations are among the first to be thought of and implemented (Choate, 2000; Friend & Bursuck, 2002; Lewis & Doorlag, 1999). Physical adaptations are in fact the easiest adaptations that need to be made in relation to inclusion, and are also the adaptations that need to be made in the beginning. They also require less field knowledge and can be observed by the teachers in a more tangible fashion. It is therefore possible to say that these adaptations are marked more by the teachers. A review of the items that are considered the most and the least important by the teachers within the scope of physical and educational adaptations reveals that the teachers do not consider a couple of adaptations important and necessary, which are given in both groups (physical and educational adaptations) for students with special needs in inclusive settings. This can be explained with the limited knowledge of the teachers with regard to the instructional adaptations that need to be made within the scope of the special education support services that need to be provided to the students with special needs in inclusive settings.

Consequently, it is possible to say that the teachers have marked the educational adaptations, which allow their students to become more in-

volved with the educational/teaching process, less important than the physical adaptations, and this is mainly caused by the easier and more cost-efficient nature of the physical adaptations.

There is a limitation in this study, which needs to be taken into consideration. The SIMI's factor analysis studies were based on the data collected from a limited number (160 individuals) of teachers. It is therefore suggested that future studies evaluate the opinions of teachers of greater quantity and diversity (branch teachers, secondary education teachers, etc.) with regard to the inclusion.

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