Turkish Teachers' Expectancies for Success in Inclusive Classrooms

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Abstract

The present study was designed to investigate (a) which social skills were accepted as critical for success in inclusive classrooms according to the Turkish general classroom teachers and (b) whether the teachers' expectancies related to social skills of the students with and without disabilities differed. The importance dimension of the Social Skills Rating System-Social Skills test (SST) developed by Gresham and Elliott was administered to the 172 teachers in order to determine the social skills expectations for the students. Each teacher was asked to fill out two forms, one for the students with special needs (SSN) and the other for the average student (AS) of the classroom identified based on the teachers' views. To evaluate elementary school teachers' expectancies, the percentage of the teachers who scored each item of the SSS-T by giving 0, 1 and 2 were calculated and thus the social skills accepted as "not important", "important" and "critical" for success by the teachers were identified. In order to compare teachers' expectations for SSN and AS, Mann Whitney-U test was used. The results of the analysis indicated that most of the teachers thought that none of social skills were critical for the school success of SSN whereas 13 social skills mostly from cooperation subscale of the social skills test were important for these students. By most of the teachers, 10 social skills mostly from assertiveness subscale were considered as critically important for AS. In addition, it was found that the teachers' social skills expectations for SSN are significantly less than their peers without special needs.

Key Words

Social Skills, Teacher Expectations', Students with Special Needs, Inclusion.

Teachers' expectancies are generally defined as the cues of teachers shaping the behaviors of children (Good, 1987 cited in Trouilloud, Sarrazin, Martinek, & Guillet, 2002). In existing literature, several researchers highlighted that there was a strong relationship between teachers' expectancies and the achievement of their students; in other words, the success of students might increase or decrease parallel to teachers' expectancies (Alvidrez & Weinstein, 1999; Harris, Rosenthal, & Snodgrass, 1986; Jussim, Smith, Madon, & Palumbo, 1998, Trouilloud et al., 2002). When students are aware of the expectancies of the teacher, they are more likely to learn and use the skills being emphasized and praised by their teachers. In addition, the students who meet the teachers' and peers' expectancies are more likely to be adapted to the classrooms and are able to attain more positive outcomes in terms of academic and social success (Beebe-Frankenberger, Lane, Bocian, Gresham, & McMillan, 2005). Therefore, one of the most important roles of schools is to teach and shape positive social behaviors of students so as to support their socialization and academic achievement in the classrooms.

Students with disabilities who are placed in general classrooms, similar to their peers without disabilities, are required to meet teachers' expectations such as following instruction, complying with rules, and establishing friendships (Lane, Givner, & Pierson, 2004; Lane, Pierson, & Givner, 2003). However, in literature, it was frequently pointed out that students with disabilities generally fail to meet teachers' expectations related to social skills (cited in McMullen, Shippen, & Dangel, 2007). For example, children experiencing behavioral and learning difficulties are unable to establish and maintain friendship and have trouble initiating in-

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terpersonal behaviors, deficiencies in the cognitive problem-solving skills that negatively affect both teacher-related and peer-related adjustment (Lane, 1999). In addition, they may have little regard for typical school behavior-related expectancies such as listening, following directions, and waiting to take a turn (Ellett, 1993 cited in McMullen, Shippen, & Dangel, 2007). Considering the fact that teachers' expectations have important effects on students performances (Brophy & Good, 1970; Cooper, 1979; Good, 1987) and expectations of teachers are accepted as strong predictors of students achievement (Brattesani, Middlestadt, & Marshall, 1981; Trouillard et al., 2002), it would be logical to think that performance related to the social and academic achievement of students with disabilities would be affected by the views of teachers (Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001; Palardy, 1998). On the other hand, attitudes and expectancies of the general classroom teachers can be negatively affected by the failures of students with disabilities (Hughes, Ruhl, Schumaker, & Deshler, 2002), such as name (Anderson-Clark, Green, & Henley, 2008; Özkal, Kılıç, & Yıldız, 2002) and ethnicity (Obiakor, 1999; Wigfield, Galper, Denton, & Seefeldt, 1999) and consequently, the academic and social problems of students with disabilities can increase due to lower teachers' expectancies (Lenz & Mellard, 1990; McMullen et al., 2007).

In the study of Walker and Rankin (1983), teacher expectancies related to social skills of the students were investigated for the first time. The Inventory of Teacher Social Behavior Standards and Expectations developed in order to evaluate expectancies and behavioral norms of the teachers was used in the study. The inventory was administered to 55 general education and 22 special education teachers and the results indicated that both groups of teachers' views regarding students' behaviors were similar. The teachers viewed several skills such as following directions, controlling anger, complying with rules as important skills for success in classrooms. In addition, stealing, self-damaging and hurting others physically were viewed as unacceptable behaviors by the teachers. The results of early studies focusing on teachers' expectations indicated the fact that main expectations of teachers were similar for kindergarten, elementary, and secondary schools and attending and following directions, completing school work, managing conflicts were the most important skills for the teachers (Hersch & Walker, 1983; Kerr & Zigmond, 1986).

In the last decade, studies investigating the expect-

ancies of teachers have increased and the views of the general and special education teachers regarding social skills (Lane, Givner et al., 2004; Lane, Pierson et al., Givner, 2003; Meier, DiPerna, & Oster, 2006; Paape, 2000) were examined. The Social Skills Rating System developed by Gresham and Elliott (1990) was mostly used as an assessment tool by the researchers and whether teachers' expectancies changed according to several demographic variables were explored. For example, in three studies, the results revealed that most of the teachers viewed "follows directions, uses free times appropriately, listens to instructions, gets along with different people, controls anger, responds appropriately when being hit or pushed" skills as critical skills for school success (Lane, Givner et al., 2004; Lane, Pierson et al., Givner, 2003; Lane, Wehby, & Cooley, 2006). In addition, these studies showed that assertion skills were not accepted as important as self-control and cooperation skills for students by both general and special education teachers. General classroom teachers rated cooperation skills as more important than assertion and self-control skills for school success. Lane and her colleagues emphasized that general classroom teachers considered in-class behaviors as important skills for the students, whereas special education teachers viewed self-control behaviors as critical skills for success in classrooms.

In Turkey, the number of school-aged students with special needs in general education classrooms is increasing each year (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 2009) and the social skills of students with and without disabilities in these classrooms have been investigated by several researchers. In some studies, the social skills of students with disabilities were assessed and compared with the skills of their peers without disabilities (e.g., Baydık & Bakkaloğlu, 2009; Poyraz Tüy, 1999; Sucuoğlu & Özokçu, 2005; Vuran, 2005). Another group of researchers focused on the effects of various programs developed based on different educational approaches on social skills of students with disabilities (Akfırat, 2004; Avcıoğlu, 2001; Çifci, 2001; Gürgür, 2005; Özaydın, 2006; Sazak, 2003; Ünsal 2007). In a study related to the mainstreaming problems in Turkey, Sazak-Pınar (2009) indicated that general classroom teachers complained about problem behaviors of students with disabilities and they stated that these students experiences difficulties in social skills such as listening, attending, following instruction, and sitting appropriately during instruction. Despite the social skills of students with disabilities were thoroughly assessed in terms

of various demographic characteristics and their teachers, teachers' expectancies from the students point of view have not been investigated yet. In one study (Çifci-Tekinarslan, Sazak-Pınar, & Sucuoğlu, 2009), the parents and teachers ratings of social skills, problem behaviors, and academic competence of children with special needs who were attending in special education school and special class were investigated and their expectations were compared. However, studies in the past frequently emphasized that it was necessary to identify teachers' expectancies and to help students meeting these expectancies so as to increase students' outcomes in inclusive classrooms (Beebe-Frankenberger et al., 2005; Lane, Givner et al., 2004). Moreover, Lane, Pierson et al. (2004) and Lane et al. (2005) suggested that teachers' expectancies might not be uniform among students; therefore, student-specific expectancies can be explored by having teachers rate the importance of social skills for different students in their classrooms. Therefore, it is believed if teachers views related to critical social skills for the students with disabilities is identified, this would lead educators to teach these skills to students and provide opportunities with students so that they can meet teachers' and peers' expectancies. Considering the results of the previous studies, the purpose of the current study is to investigate which social skills are accepted as critical for success in inclusive classrooms according to Turkish general classroom teachers and whether behavioral expectancies teachers hold for students with and without disabilities differ.

Method

Study Subjects

The study group consisted of 172 elementary school teachers who have students with disabilities in their classrooms in the city of Bolu, Turkey. Descriptive statistics indicated that approximately forty percent of the teachers were between the ages of 36-45 years, and only 10 % of the group was younger than 25 years old. The group was composed of 94 (55%) women and 78 (45%) men. Majority of the teachers (85.5%) graduated from various departments of Faculties of Education and the remaining had graduate degrees from different faculties; however, having been certificated by the Ministry of Education, they were appointed as elementary school teachers. Seventy percent of the group stated that they had no training on special education and mainstreaming while only 30 % had one or two courses during their undergraduate educa-

tion or participated short-term, two week courses aimed to give information about mainstreaming and students with disabilities. The numbers of the total years of teaching of the teachers varied from 2-32 years, and although they did not have information or experiences regarding mainstreaming, 62 % of the group reported that they had students with disabilities in their classrooms over a period of ten years. A group of students with disabilities placed in classrooms of the teachers was diagnosed as having a mild form of various disabilities such as mental retardation, emotional and behavioral disorders, or learning disability while the other group, although they had no official diagnoses, was stated by their teachers as students with special needs because of their academic and behavioral problems exhibited in their classrooms.

Instrument

The Social Skills Scale (SSS), one of the instruments of the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) developed by Gresham and Elliot (1990), was used for data collection. This scale consists of three domains; cooperation, assertion, and self control. The cooperation domain contains items related to helping others, sharing, complying with directions and rules, whereas assertion domain includes items related to asking information, introducing self and responding the others. Moreover, the self control domain includes behaviors being exhibited in the situations such as disagreement with others. The SSS can be scored in two ways: First, the social skills of children are rated by observing the behaviors displayed in the last one or two months and deciding how frequently each skill is displayed by children. Each skill is scored as zero (never observed), 1 (sometimes observed) or 2 (frequently observed) according to the frequency of the skills observed. The total scores to be obtained can change between 0-60. In addition, the expectations of teachers related to social skills of children are also assessed by using the SSS. In order to assess the level of importance of each social skill for school success, teachers rate each items by using 0 (not important), 1 (important) and 2 (very important/critical). In this study, since the researchers aimed to assess the level of importance of each social skill for the students with and without disabilities, the second way of scoring was used by the teachers. All teachers were asked to complete the SSS by reading the items carefully and decide what the importance level of the each item was for success of students with and without disabilities in inclusive classrooms.

The adaptation and factor analytic studies of the Turkish version of Social Skills Scale (SSS-T) were conducted by Sucuoglu and Özokçu (2005) and it was found that although some items of the SSS took place in different factors, all subscales of the instrument had a similar structure with the original instrument. Only one item was taken out from the self control factor owing to lower than .30 factor loading. Consequently, the SSS consisted of total 29 items including 10 items in assertion subscale, 7 items in self control and 12 items in cooperation subscale. Internal consistency reliability was established by calculating Cronbach Alpha values and was found that the value of alpha was .96 for total score, and .91, 93, and .84 for the factor 1, factor 2 and factor 3 scores, respectively.

After obtaining permission from Bolu School District to collect the research data, teachers who have students with disabilities in their classrooms were determined by the first researcher. Then, the SSS was introduced to the classroom teachers by the researchers and the school counselors. Because the researchers wanted to find out whether teachers expectancies change according to the characteristics of the students, each teacher was asked to fill two forms out, one for the students with disabilities and the other for an average student of the classroom identified based on the teachers' views.

Results

To evaluate elementary school teachers' expectancies, the percentage of teachers who scored each item of the SSS-T by giving 0, 1 and 2 were calculated and thus the social skills accepted as "not important", "important" and "critical" for success by the teachers were identified. In previous studies, because the researchers accepted the skills rated with (2) by more than 50% of the teachers as "critical/very important skills" for the school success (Lane, Givner et al., 2004; Lane, Pierson, & Givner, 2003, 2004; Lane et al., 2006; Meier et al., 2006), each social skill meeting the "more than 50%" criteria was accepted as critical for the current study as well. Table 2 illustrates the frequency and the percentages of the teachers who gave 0, 1, and 2 for all items of the SSS-T.

The results of the analysis indicated that none of the items were identified as "critical/very important" for students with disabilities to perform by the majority of teachers whereas only 13 skills were rated as "important" by more than 50% of teachers for this group of students. Six out of 13 important

skills are from the cooperation domain of SSS-T and 3 items are from the assertion domain. Item 18 from self-control domain, "Accepts ideas of peers in group activities", was rated as "important skill" to be displayed in classroom by the majority of the teachers (61.6%) for the students with disabilities. On the other hand, ten skills from the assertion domain met the criterion of teachers rating them as critical / very important for the students without disabilities and only one item "Attends to your instruction" was rated as critical by 60.5 % of the elementary school teachers.

In addition to investigating the critical social skills for success, in order to investigate whether the teachers' importance scores differ according to students' characteristics, the collected data from 172 elementary teachers were analyzed. First, total scores and the assertion, cooperation and self-control domain scores given by the teachers were calculated for students with and without disabilities. Then, it was examined whether the three domain scores of the SSS-T distributed normally by Kolmogorov Smirnov Test and because of the fact that significant values for subscale scores were less than .05 (for cooperation $p= .005$, for self control $p= .002$, for assertiveness scale $p= .001$), the scores of the three subscale were accepted as not normally distributed (Büyüköztürk, 2005; Pallant, 2001). In addition, variances of the scores of the assertion, cooperation and self control domains were investigated by using Homogeneity of the Variances T test and the result of the Levine Test indicated that variances of the scores were equal due to the fact that significance values of the subscale scores were more than .05 (Büyüköztürk, 2005; Pallant, 2001). Consequently, the Mann Whitney U test for independent group was carried out so as to examine whether the importance scores of the teachers were affected by the students' characteristics. The findings show that the teachers expectancies changed according to the characteristics of the students and the teachers had expected higher levels of cooperation, assertion and self-control from the students without disabilities than their peers with disabilities (U=8.52; $p= .000$ for cooperation, U=8.84, $p=.000$ for self control and U=8.02 $p=.000$ for assertion subscale).

Discussion

In the current study, expectancies related to the social skills of teachers who have students with disabilities in their classrooms were investigated. In an attempt to reach the purpose of the study, the

teachers completed one SSS-T form for students with disability and one for students without disability. The researchers calculated the percentage of teachers who rated each social skill as not important, important and critical for students with and without disabilities separately and identified which social skills were viewed as critical for the two groups of students. According to the results, all social skills, except "Gives compliments to peers" and "Introduces herself or himself to new people without being told", were rated as critical for students without disabilities by approximately 50% of the teachers (range: %41.9-%60.2). In addition, 10 skills, mostly from the assertion subscale, were viewed critical for the same group by more than 50% of teachers, contrary to the findings of the previous studies indicating that cooperation and self control skills were viewed as more important than the assertion skills by the teachers (Gresham, Dolstra, Lambros, McLaughlin, & Lane, 2000; Lane, Givner et al., 2004; Lane, Pierson et al., 2003; Lane et al., 2006; Meier et al., 2006). Because of the fact that social skills are affected by the cultural characteristics of the social groups or societies (Cartledge & Loe, 2001), it is logical to think that teachers who are from different cultures might view different social skills as important or critical for success in their classrooms. For example, in Turkey, in a study conducted by Yurtal and Yontar (2006), with 31 elementary school teachers, the mostly expected behavior from Turkish elementary school students was found to be as "carrying out the tasks given by teachers." In addition, Onur (1976) also stated that teachers generally expected "compliance behaviors" from students in elementary classrooms. In another study focused on determining the characteristics of the ideal student according to the teachers' point of view, the researchers found that those who comply with rules, attend to instruction and talk with permission in classroom were the ideal students for the in-service and pre-service Turkish teachers (Artar, Çuhadaroğlu, & Türk, 2009). Moreover, Kağıtçıbaşı (2007), in her study investigating the behaviors of the Turkish parents based on cultural characteristics of the country, stated that "compliance" was the mostly preferred child characteristic for the parents. Taken these studies into account, it was thought that the Turkish teachers viewed assertion skills such as "completing class work in time" and "complying with directions" more important for school success than the teachers from the other countries. This difference could be explained by the cultural characteristics of the countries.

The findings related with students with disabilities surprisingly indicated that the teachers did not view any social skills as critical for success in the classroom for students with disabilities. That is, the social skills included in the SSS-T were not viewed as pivotal to school success of students with disabilities by 50 % or more of the teachers. Although all the skills, except six of them, were rated as critical by one fourth of the teachers, none of the skills met the "rated by 50% or more of the teachers" criterion accepted by the researchers. In addition, the importance scores of three subscales for the two groups of students were compared and the teachers' expectancies from the students with disabilities were found to be significantly less than students without disabilities. In other words, according to the teachers, the social skills are not as important for the success of the students with disabilities as they are for their peers without disabilities.

This finding is deemed to be related to the attitudes of the teachers towards students with disabilities and as well as mainstreaming students, and it is believed that if the teachers knowledge and the experiences about students with special needs increase, their expectancies would change and become more realistic (Bender & Smith, 1990; Paape, 2000). Moreover, the fact that students with disabilities display more problem behaviors such as talking inappropriately and not complying with the directions (Kavale & Forness, 1996; Safran & Safran, 1985) and that they have limited academic engagement (Bulgren & Carta, 1992) and poor social skills (Guralnick & Weinhouse, 1984; Hamre-Nietupski, Hendrickson, Nietupski, & Sasso, 1993) might have negatively affected the teachers' expectancies (Bender & Smith, 1990; Westwood, 1997 cited in Akalın, 2007). As previously emphasized in several studies, regular classroom teachers generally lack information on characteristics of students with disabilities and also the adaptations and accommodation of the program and teaching methods to be done according to the students' needs (Baker & Zigmond, 1995; Diken & Sucuoğlu, 1999; Lane, 2003; Paterson & Graham, 2000; Scruggs & Mastopieri, 1996; Sucuoğlu & Kargın, 2006, Uysal, 2004). In Turkey, although mainstreaming was mandated by the law in 1983 and each year the number of students with disabilities in regular classroom has been increasing, most of the teachers are known not to be properly prepared to teach students with disabilities (Kargın, Acarlar, & Sucuoğlu, 2005; Sucuoğlu & Kargın, 2006, Uysal, 2004). Therefore, the researchers thought that the teachers participating in this study might have believed that the two groups of

students were different in terms of their needs and social skills were not important for students with disabilities as much as for their peers without disabilities. In addition, in previous studies, it was found that the teachers' views regarding to the social skills might have been affected by several variables such as gender, age, ethnical, physical and also the family characteristics of the students (Anderson et al., 2007; Baron, Tom & Cooper, 1985; Hattie, 2003; Özkal et al., 2002; Palardy, 1998; Solomon, Battistich, & Hom, 1996 cited in Rubie-Davies, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2006) and that the students have disabilities might change the teachers views about the importance of the social skills (Levin, Smith, & Arluke, 1982; Rubie-Davies, 2007). Finally, the researchers think that this finding could have been due to the fact that the general classroom teachers were not well aware of the relationship between social skills, academic skills and problem behaviors of students with and without disabilities displayed in classrooms (Sazak-Pınar, 2009).

The results of this study are considered very important for students with disabilities who were placed in general classrooms, because of the fact that teachers' expectancies are accepted as an important variable that predicts the success of the students. For example Brophy (1970), in his study investigating the teacher's expectancies related to classroom success, stated that the teachers expected higher performance from the students who were expected to be more successful than the other students. Moreover, there have been several studies emphasizing that teachers' expectancy was an important indicator of the school success of the students and the student's success increased or decreased depending on the expectancies of the teachers (Alvidrez & Weinstein, 1999; Brattesani et al., 1981; Harris et al., 1986; Jussim et al., 1998; Spader, 2006; Trouillard et al., 2002). Taking these studies into consideration, it was thought that lower expectancies of the general education teachers might negatively affect the success and social skills which were already limited because of their disabilities.

Although the current study might play a leading role for the future research and give preliminary findings regarding teachers' expectancies for researchers, one important limitation should be considered. In this research, all data were collected based on teachers' views, and whether they taught and / or reinforced these skills being displayed by the students during instruction have not been examined. However, it is believed that observing teachers in their classroom and determining what

social skills are being taught during instruction will provide more detailed information pertaining to the social skills of the students in connection with the teachers' behaviors so as to develop in-service programs for the teachers and social skills program for the students as well. In addition, the researchers of the current study suggest that future research might investigate teacher and student variables that might affect teachers' expectancies and views related to social competencies and social skills of the students. Finally, the researchers might pursue a course of investigations so that they can find out whether the students learn necessary social skills during their school year and they can also conduct research determining the effects of the teacher training programs not only on students' outcomes but also on teachers' expectancies.

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