

Developing Primary School Teachers' Classroom Management Skills^{1*}

Şenay Sezgin Nartgün², Türkan Argon²

²Prof. Dr., Abant İzzet Baysal University, Faculty of Education, Educational Sciences Department

Email: szbn@yahoo.com , turkanargon@hotmail.com

Abstract

This study aimed to develop classroom management skills of teachers employed in Bolu province primary schools as classroom teachers and subject matter teachers. Qualitative research method was adopted to determine whether teacher perceptions on classroom management presented any changes. Study group was composed of 100 teachers employed in primary schools throughout Bolu. Out of 100 participating teachers, 31 teachers were excluded from analysis due to incomplete information in their forms. Data were collected in written form via pre and post tests. Following the pretest, teachers were given a 2-day, 10-hour seminar to develop classroom management skills. Some of the findings are as follows: 15 of the participating teachers found themselves competent in all aspects of classroom management. 12 teachers regarded themselves as relatively competent and 2 teachers found themselves incompetent in classroom management in terms of time management, controlling classroom disruptions, providing sufficient number of activities, ensuring fair communication, providing motivation and including all students in the lesson.

Keywords: Classroom Management, Teacher, Classroom Management Skills

1. Introduction

Increase in achievement in line with the general goals of the system of education will only be possible with effective teaching and use of effective classroom management skills. Both content knowledge and classroom management skills are prerequisites for good classroom management. The fundamental role of teachers is to create behavioral change in students in the desired direction based on identified goals and this task can only be achieved via the creation of effective educational settings which are only possible through classroom management skills. However, some of these skills are easily demonstrated by teachers since they are inherent, some others are acquired through education (Şahin, 2003). The skills that can be acquired through education are taught to teacher candidates with the help of Classroom Management Course included in pre-service undergraduate training. But, this course, provided to candidates during teacher training, has limited credits and includes only theoretical information. However, in addition to theoretical information, Classroom Management is a philosophical approach that allows teachers to define in-class living; therefore, these skills should be provided to teachers during their training based on different perspectives. It is not wise to approach a large number of students who have different expectations and needs by using a single perspective. While the theoretical course cannot provide teacher candidates with various perspectives and approaches, it also cannot help teacher candidates acquire the necessary skills fully. Sometimes it is not even possible to raise awareness and the topic may be neglected. This prevents teachers to achieve sufficient success during teaching activities (Celep, 2002; Kaliska, 2002; Wragg and Wragg, 1998).

Classroom management skills can be examined under four headings as management of teaching along with procedural-routine classroom tasks and management of student behaviors in the desired direction by ensuring physical order (Sanford and Emer, 1998) as well as under five dimensions as activities related to physical arrangements in classroom environment, activities related to plans-programs, activities related to time management, activities related to relationships in the classroom and activities related to behaviors in the classroom (Başar, 1999; Gündüz, 2004). Teachers' classroom management skills identified in these studies are reflected on student behaviors in the classroom after being combined with various other knowledge, skills and attitudes that teachers possess (Terzi, 2002) and these skills positively contribute to the process. As a matter of fact, in the classrooms of teachers with effective classroom management skills, teachers as well as students experience less problems, produce solutions, demonstrate higher motivation, happiness and performance (Teven and McCroskey, 1997, cited in: Freeman 2011; Rodabaugh and Kravitz, 1994, cited in: Houston and Bettencourt, 1999) and classroom life quality becomes more positive. Student behaviors and attitudes may change based on the type of communication (fair or unfair communication) and the interaction between students and teachers and it may create the perception of fairness in classroom settings which is a crucial element in the formation and development of

learning environments (Argon and Kepekçioğlu, 2016). On the other hand, teachers who cannot ensure physical order in their classrooms organize in-class relationships and use their time effectively may be unsuccessful in classroom management and experience stress (Aydın, 2002; Sarıtaş, 2003), experience hardships in controlling students and directing them to learning activities and therefore may become upset and reflect these negative feelings on students (Ekici, 2008). Relevant studies (Demirtaş, 2005; Ekici, 2008; Eren, 2004; Sarpkaya, 2000; Sevim and Hamamcı, 1999) show that perceptions of professional competence affect job satisfaction.

Examination of relevant literature on classroom management (Sevim and Hamamcı, 1999; Sarpkaya, 2000; Aydın, 2002; Sarıtaş, 2003; Sucuoğlu, Ünsal and Özokçu, 2004; Eren, 2004; Demirtaş, 2005; Ekici, 2008) demonstrates that any successful change at schools is related to teachers' skills and abilities and the most fundamental role of teachers is to create a positive and supportive setting based on well organized and planned classroom management.

Purpose of the Study

Conducted in this context, this study, aimed to examine whether the teacher perceptions regarding classroom management skills changed as a result of the seminar process provided to develop classroom management skills of classroom and subject matter teachers (English, Religious Culture etc.) employed in Bolu province primary schools. Answers to two questions were sought with this aim in mind: The first question dealt with identifying the level of teachers' classroom management perceptions before the seminar while the second aimed to determine the level following the seminar to ascertain whether the seminar contributed to teacher development.

Problem Statement

Do teacher perceptions regarding classroom management skills change as a result of the seminar process provided to develop classroom management skills of classroom and subject matter teachers (English, Religious Culture etc.) employed in Bolu province primary schools?

2. Method

Research Model

Qualitative research method was utilized to determine whether teachers' classroom management perceptions changed or not. Phenomenological approach was utilized to identify teachers' classroom management perceptions and to present the point of direction.

Study Group

The study group was composed of 100 primary schools teachers in Bolu province who attended the seminar provided to develop classroom management skills. While the study group included 100 teachers who participated in the seminar, the opinions of 31 teachers were excluded from the analysis since their pretests were incomplete. Examination of personal information shared by participating teachers showed that 34 of the participants were females while 35 were males; 49 worked at schools in city center, 15 worked at schools near city center and 5 worked at rural schools. Only 64 of the participating teachers volunteered to take part in the post test after the training.

Data Collection

At this point, it is imperative to mention the fact that various negative factors were at work during the seminar provided to develop teachers' classroom management skills since the process is believed to have affected the training and the research results. Cooperation with Bolu Directorate of National Education For the seminar organized for the study was unsatisfactory and the venue of the seminar was not appropriately announced to teachers or an inaccurate venue was announced. This confusion caused the seminar to start with delay on the first day of the seminar; June 21, 2016. Despite this setback, the training in the context of the seminar was given for a total of two days and ten hours in June 21-22, 2016. In addition, despite the fact that Bolu Directorate of National Education was notified during the meetings that the training was specific for voluntary teachers who wanted to develop their classroom management skills; it was identified during the training that most of the participating teachers were directed to the seminar unwillingly. This fact prevented the implementation of the seminar in a sound manner both in terms of the process and products. Unwilling teachers who attended the seminar out of obligation came to the seminar to fill the time and preferred to sit at the back of the seminar room and chat among themselves instead of

interacting with the trainers and played with their cell phones, tablets or computers the whole time, they came to sessions late and just wanted to sign their names and leave early. The information obtained at the end of the seminar also showed that there were various teachers at primary schools who wanted to attend this training but were not notified.

On the other hand, as identified through their active participation, questions and behaviors, the teachers who came voluntarily were extremely willing to learn. These teachers sat at the front row of chairs, shared their experiences and problems, often asked questions, warned the unwilling teachers who did not listen to the seminar and even advised them to leave the premises if they did not intend to participate. As observed, teachers who wanted to train and develop themselves in regards to classroom management were visibly bothered by the unwilling and indifferent demeanors of the teachers who were forced to attend the seminar. These sentiments were expressed directly by the teachers themselves. Unfortunately, these factors affected the use of training time effectively and productively. Considering the issues addressed in the context of classroom management, trainers felt as if classroom management issues experienced in the classroom with actual students were experienced during the seminar in the most efficacious manner.

Pre and post tests were implemented by the researchers to collect written data for the study. Pretest was conducted prior to the seminar and the post test was implemented after the 2-day, 10-hour seminar and training on classroom management skills. During the training, teachers were given a Classroom Management Booklet to be used to further develop their skills and enhance their motivation.

The issues addressed in the seminar included preparation for school and classroom, foundations of classroom management, physical environment and the management of the classroom, communication in the classroom, motivation in the classroom, undesired behaviors among students and conflict management, fairness in the classroom and time management.

Data Analysis

A 10 cm metrical ruler and open ended questions were utilized to determine teachers’ perceptions of their skills in regards to classroom management. In both pre and post tests, teacher names were listed and they were asked to mark the level they believed they achieved in terms of classroom management and answer researchers’ questions. Later, the marks selected by teachers in pre and post tests were measured and transformed into numeric data to determine their perceived levels. These data provided the researchers with the levels of classroom management skills perceived by teachers themselves and pointed to development of these skills between pre and post tests. Teachers were asked open ended questions related to the reasons why they marked these specific scores on the metric ruler and their answers were analyzed with content analysis.

3. Findings, Interpretation and Discussion

Metric measurements and teacher answers to open ended questions during the pretest conducted before seminar are provided below:

Table 1. Teachers’ perceptions of their classroom management skills before the seminar

Measurement on the metric ruler							
Pre test Number of teachers	Less than 5	5	6	7	8	9	10
	2	5	5	12	17	13	15

Table 1 demonstrates that 15 teachers who attended the seminar believed that they were already competent in classroom management issues before they took the training. They found themselves competent in all aspects of classroom management so they marked the level of 10 on the metric ruler. When they explained the reasons why they marked the ruler at the level of 10, it was found that these teachers did not need any support or assistance in terms of classroom management and did not experience any problems in their classes. This finding is rather significant. The teaching profession, one of the careers which require constant change, experiences intense social relationships. Considering diverse student needs, perfect or untroubled teacher-student relationships in the classroom seems like utopia. As a matter of fact, when one considers that human needs are without limit and so different from one another, it will be clear that the needs and expectations of an average of 25-30 students in one classroom

will vastly differ. Hence, it is impossible to avoid problems. On the other hand, teachers have to train students with different characteristics and skills instead of uniform student bodies so that societies can develop and improve. It should be kept in mind that education is a lifelong process which requires renewal.

According to Table 1, 13 teachers marked the level 9 on the measurement scale which points to the fact that they found themselves competent to a large extent. When they explained the reasons why they marked the ruler at this level, these teachers expressed that in general they did not need any support or assistance in classroom management, however, two teachers stated that they did not know how to teach students in inclusion classrooms. 17 of the participating teachers marked the level 8 on the measurement scale and stated that although they generally regarded themselves as competent, they felt inadequate in terms of time management, fairness in the classroom, in-class rules, content of some of the lessons, communication with parents, inclusive education and including unwilling students in the classroom. 12 of the participating teachers found themselves partly competent and marked 7 on the metric ruler. The areas where these teachers felt incompetent included technological advances, use of materials, dealing with stimulants in the classroom, motivation and dealing with undesired behavior. This finding points to the fact that teachers are aware of their shortcomings and want to overcome these issues. As a matter of fact, their explanations included statements that expressed desire to develop themselves and overcome their shortcomings. It was observed that teachers who were aware of their shortcomings were open to development and change. Degol and Bachman (2015) also reported that teacher competences were effective on classroom management skills. Considering the fact that education does not only include lectures and training, it is seen that all types of acquisitions related to being good persons, good citizens and good professionals include many skills and characteristics such as motivation, communication, dealing with undesired behaviors and effective time management. If the goal is to educate individuals with these skills, teachers should have these skills first and act as role models.

5 of the teachers believed that they were a bit above the average in terms of classroom management skills. Their explanations showed that these teachers felt incompetent in terms of communication with parents, motivation, time management, dealing with undesired behaviors and methods and techniques to be used in the classroom. Similarly, another 5 of the participating teachers felt inadequate in terms of classroom management and felt they could be regarded as medium level. The classroom management skills that were problematic for these teachers were dealing with undesired behaviors in the classroom, teaching students with learning difficulties and use of methods and techniques. Lastly, 2 of the teachers felt inadequate in terms of some of the classroom management skills such as time management controlling the noise in the classroom, providing sufficient activities for students, ensuring fair communication in the classroom, providing motivation and including all students in the classroom and they stated that they were below 5 in the metric ruler. While the finding that teachers found themselves incompetent is a negative one, their self criticism can be regarded as positive because these teachers are aware of their shortcomings and want to improve themselves. The teaching profession requires constant change and improvement. Similarly, in their study, Akın and Koçak (2007) found that a substantial ratio of teachers (36,6%) evaluated themselves as medium or below in terms of classroom management skills.

Table 2. Teacher perceptions regarding their classroom management skills after the seminar

		Measurement on the metric ruler					
Post test Number of teachers	No selection	1	6	7	8	9	10
		1	1	3	4	15	22

Table 2 displays that 1 of the teachers marked the level 1 after the training and 1 teacher did not specify any level. These teachers stated that the training they received did not affect their classroom management competence while one of these two teachers mentioned that he/she did not want to attend any training on classroom management. This finding is interesting since none of the teachers had marked the level 1 before the training. This finding may mean that the training increased teacher awareness levels. The response claiming that the training had no impact on classroom management skills and the fact that responding teacher did not want to attend further training on classroom management was found to be premeditated. As was previously mentioned in the Method section, some of the participating teachers participated in the seminar unwillingly.

3 of the teachers regarded themselves to be at level 6 after the training. Two of these teachers stated that the training contributed to their learning whereas one teacher expressed that the training was not beneficial. 4 teachers marked level 7 on the metric scale. 3 of these teachers stated that the training

affected their classroom management competences while one teacher mentioned that the training was a replica of what had been learnt before. 15 of the participating teachers regarded themselves to be at level 8 after the training. Four of these teachers stated that the seminar was a repetition of what they already knew whereas one of these teachers reported that he/she acquired skills to solve problems. 11 of these teachers directly reported that the training they were provided with were productive in improving their competences. As contributions, these teachers cited that the training refreshed previously learned information, made them comprehend that these problems were experienced by other teachers as well, had them look for solutions together and learned how to get professional support and assistance and how to provide democratic training.

22 participating teachers perceived themselves to have level 9 classroom management skills, in other words, very close to fully competent. All of these teachers stated that the training positively contributed to their careers. They cited the following issues in terms of contribution: fairness in the classroom, communication among students, identifying the rules in the classroom, problematic students and how to solve problems and teaching productive lessons. In addition to these issues, these teachers emphasized that these types of trainings should be provided to novice teachers rather than teachers with 20 years experience. However, relevant literature (Denizel-Güven and Cevher, 2005; Toran and Akkuş, 2016) shows a negative correlation between professional seniority and classroom management skills.

16 participating teachers found themselves fully competent. The number of teachers who believed they were fully competent before the training was 15. This finding may be interpreted in a manner that the seminar generated difference in the views of one teacher. Teacher names were taken in both tests. In other words, these teachers believed that the training had no contributions to their classroom management skills. Some teachers explained that the timing of the seminar and the inadequate physical conditions of the venue contributed to this perception. Findings also show that almost all participating teachers stated that they did not want to attend further training. Another interesting finding shows that the majority of teachers with these negative discourse patterns are senior teachers.

4. Results and Suggestions

The results of the study conducted to examine whether teacher perceptions regarding classroom management skills changed as a result of the seminar process provided to develop classroom management skills of classroom and subject matter teachers (English, Religious Culture etc.) employed in Bolu province primary schools showed that 15 of the participating teachers found themselves fully competent in all aspects of classroom management while 13 of the participating teachers regarded themselves to be competent to a great extent. The majority of these teachers stated that they did not need any support or assistance and only two of them experienced hardships in teaching students in inclusive education. While 17 of the participating teachers felt competent, they also felt inadequate in some aspects of classroom management such as time management, fairness in the classroom, in-class rules, content of some lessons, communication with parents, inclusive education and including unwilling students into lessons.

12 of the participating teachers felt relatively competent in terms of some classroom management skills such as technological developments, use of materials, dealing with stimulants in the classroom, providing motivation and dealing with undesired behaviors. This finding shows that they also felt relatively incompetent in these aspects. 5 of the teachers perceived themselves to be a little bit above the medium level and reported their incompetence in classroom management skills such as communication with parents, time management, dealing with undesired behaviors, providing motivation and use of methods and techniques in the classroom. 5 of the participating teachers regarded themselves to be at medium level in terms of classroom management skills. The skills these teachers felt themselves to be incompetent were dealing with undesired behaviors in the classroom, teaching students with learning difficulties and using methods and techniques in the classroom. Only 2 of the teachers perceived themselves at a level below 5 and stated that they were incompetent in the following skills: time management, controlling the noise in the classroom, providing sufficient activities, communicating in a fair manner, providing motivation and including all students in the lesson.

While 1 teacher regarded himself/herself at level 1 after the seminar, 1 teacher did not specify his/her level. These teachers reported that the training did not affect their classroom management skills and one of these teachers stated that he/she did not want to attend any further training on classroom management. 3 of the participating teachers regarded themselves to be at the medium level. 2 of these teachers reported that the training contributed to their competences but one teacher

stated the opposite. 4 of the teachers felt they were at level 7 in terms of classroom management skills. 3 of these teachers believed that the training affected their competences in terms of classroom management skills, while one teacher reported that the training had no effect on his/her competence and the training was a repetition of what had already been taught before. 15 of the participating teachers found themselves to be competent in general. According to four of these teachers, while the seminar is a repetition of previous knowledge, one of the teachers found solutions to problems and 11 teachers found the training to be productive to improve competences in classroom management. As contributions, these teachers cited that the training refreshed previously learned information, made them comprehend that these problems were experienced by other teachers as well, had them look for solutions together and learned how to get professional support and assistance and how to provide democratic training. 22 teachers found themselves to be almost fully competent in classroom management issues. All of these teachers believed that the training was beneficial in the following topics: fairness in the classroom, communication among students, identifying rules in the classrooms, dealing with problem students and productive teaching. The participants were found to emphasize that the training should be given to novice teachers and not to teachers who taught for 20 years or more. 16 participating teachers found themselves to be fully competent in classroom management and therefore did not believe that the training had any contributions to their competence. However, it was also found that the training was found to be ineffective by some participants due to timing and inadequate physical conditions related to the venue. On the other hand, another interesting result is related to the finding that all the teachers did not want to attend trainings for improvement.

In the light of the findings obtained in this study, some suggestions are provided in regards to future training events:

- Voluntary participation should be ensured in all types of trainings organized to improve teacher skills
- All trainings organized to support teacher development should be provided either during teacher candidacy at the beginning of teaching career or during the first years of teaching.
- Practices which will generate desire for professional improvement should be provided to experienced teachers
- While the training provided in this study contributed to teachers' classroom management skills, the results show that teachers still have problems in fairness in the classroom, in-class rules, time management, communication with parents, technological developments, motivation, dealing with undesired behaviors, controlling the noise in the classroom, including unwilling student in the lessons, teaching students with learning difficulties and inclusive education. In this context, providing needs analysis before conducting teacher trainings will be more effective to solve the problems of the target audience.

References

- Akın, U., Koçak, R. (2007) Öğretmenlerin sınıf yönetimi becerileri ile iş doyumları arasındaki ilişki. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Yönetimi*, 51, 353-370
- Argon, T., Kepekcioglu, E. S. (2016). The relationship between university students' instructors' credibility and perceptions of justice in the classroom. *Anthropologist*, 24(1), 347-353.
- Aydın, İ. (2002). *İş Yaşamında Stres*. Ankara: Pegem A Yayınları.
- Başar, H. (1999). *Sınıf Yönetimi*. Ankara: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları No: 3390. Celip, C. (2002). *Sınıf Yönetimi ve Disiplini*. Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.
- Degol, J. L., Bachman, H. J. (2015). Preschool teachers' classroom behavioral socialization practices and low- income children's self-regulation skills. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. 31(2), 89-100.
- Demirtaş, H. (2005). Sınıf Yönetiminin Temelleri. H. Kıran (Editör). *Etkili Sınıf Yönetimi* (s. 1-32). Ankara: Anı Yayıncılık.
- Denizel Güven, E., Cevher, F.N. (2005). Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin sınıf yönetimi becerilerinin çeşitli değişkenler açısından incelenmesi. *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 2(18):1-22.
- Ekici, G. (2008). Sınıf yönetimi dersinin öğretmen adaylarının öğretmen öz-yeterlik algı düzeyine etkisi. *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 35(35), 98-110.
- Eren, E. (2004). *Örgütsel Davranış ve Yönetim Psikolojisi*. İstanbul: Beta Yayınları. Gündüz, H. B. (2004). *Eğitim Okul ve Sınıf Yönetimi*. Ş. Erçetin, Ç. Özdemir (Editörler). *Sınıf Yönetimi* (s. 3-32). Ankara: Asil Yayın Dağıtım.

- Freeman NPM 2011. Credibility and the Professor: The Juxtaposition of Student Perceptions and Instructor Beliefs. Unpublished master thesis. USA: University of Central Missouri.
- Houston MB, Bettencourt LA 1999. But that's not fair! An exploratory study of student perceptions of instructor fairness. Journal of Marketing Education, 21(2): 84-89. DOI: 10.1177/0273475399212002.
- Kaliska, P. (2002). A Comprehensive Study Identifying The Most Effective Classroom Management Techniques And Practices, Unpublished master thesis. The Graduate School University of Wisconsin, USA.
- Sanford, J.P., Emmer, E.T. (1988). Understanding Classroom Management: An observation guide. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Sarıtaş, M. (2003). Sınıf Yönetimi ve Disiplini ile İlgili Kurallar Geliştirme. L. Küçükahmet (Editör). Sınıf Yönetiminde Yeni Yaklaşımlar (s. 45-83). Ankara: Nobel Yayınları.
- Sarpkaya, R. (2000). Liselerde çalışan öğretmenlerin iş doyumu. Amme İdaresi Dergisi. 33(3), 111-124.
- Sevim, A.S., Hamamcı Z. (1999). Psikolojik danışmanların mesleki doyumları ile mesleki yeterlilikleri arasındaki ilişkiler. Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi. 2 (12), 39-46.
- Sucuoğlu, B., Ünsal, P., Özokçu, O. (2004). Kaynaştırma sınıfı öğretmenlerinin önleyici sınıf yönetimi becerilerinin incelenmesi. Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Özel Eğitim Dergisi, 5(02), 51- 64.
- Şahin, P. (2003), Kitle İletişim Araçlarının Sınıf Yönetimi Üzerindeki Etkisi. 19 Haziran 2006. (http://egitirim.inonu.edu.tr/PSahin_kitleilet.htm).
- Terzi, A. R. (2002). Sınıf yönetimi açısından etkili öğretmen davranışları. Milli Eğitim Dergisi, (155-156), 155- 156.
- Toran, M., Gençgel Akkuş, H. (2016). Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin sınıf yönetimi becerilerinin değerlendirilmesi: KKTC örneği. Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi, 24 (4), 2041-2056.
- Wragg, E. C., Wragg, C. M. (1998). Classroom management research in the United Kingdom. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association, San Diego. Eric Document, 418 971.

This study was conducted between 13.03.2016-13.09.2016 in line with 2016.02.02.1017# BAP Project completed in AİBÜ.

**Note: This paper was presented as oral presentation in 3rd International Conference on Lifelong Learning and Leadership for All - ICLEL-17 between 12-14 September 2017 in Porto, Portugal.*