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Examining classroom management textbooks published in Turkey in terms of addressing individuals with disabilities

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Abstract

In this study, 19 classroom management textbooks published in Turkey were examined with respect to their way of addressing people with disabilities. Content analysis was utilized in the study for organising and interpreting data based on similar concepts and themes. 19 classroom management textbooks from different authors, which are used in universities for classroom management courses, were analysed in terms of: (a) whether the existence of individuals with disabilities in general classrooms are considered in the content; (b) whether there is a separate chapter prepared on individuals with disabilities, (c) the title of the chapter in which individuals with disabilities are mentioned; and (d) whether they focus on deficiencies/problems of individuals with disabilities, or educational methods that can be utilized in their education. Results indicated that among the 19 classroom management textbooks, there is a separate chapter in only in 5 of them, Furthermore, individuals with disabilities are never mentioned in 6 of them, only 1 book indicates deficiencies of people with disabilities, and in 4 books, individuals with disabilities are mentioned under chapters with titles like “the reason of undesirable behaviours,” or “the reason of problem behaviours.”

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1. Introduction

The tendency for adapting language, thought and acts system in the social pattern, constructs the basis for the production of particular notions and rules that are largely accepted in specific professional areas (Rice, 2005). The notions and rules agreed upon are usually conveyed to the profession area via classroom textbooks. In general, these content related books have a strong impact on readers’ knowledge, opinions and values (Brantlinger, 2003; Morrison & Rude, 2002; Rice, 2005).

In terms of addressing individuals with disabilities in the content, textbooks may either provide informative support that can be useful when working with children, or may provoke negative attitudes towards people with disabilities. This is especially salient for the future professional careers of teacher candidates who are trained in education faculties (Smith, 2006). Studies investigated general education teachers’ attitudes towards individuals with disabilities, and have reported that teachers manifest negative attitudes towards the inclusion of pupils with disabilities (Cullen, Gregory & Noto, 2010; Jordan, Schwartz & Mc Ghie-Richmond, 2009; Melnick & Meister, 2008). It has been observed that teachers are conservative about the inclusion of disabled students, because of two

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prevalent reasons: First, students with disabilities take more time away from teachers. Second, educating students with disabilities requires special skills that general education teachers do not possess (Cullen et al., 2010).

The attitudes of teachers towards pupils with disabilities can be considered a reflection of social viewpoints. For instance, intellectual disabilities are a cultural and social construction rather than an objective condition. It is a label, which decreases the moral value of the individual and devalues the reason d'être of disabled persons (Taylor & Bogdan, 1989). This devaluation has demonstrated its impact throughout history. People with disabilities were first labelled 'menacing', then 'burdensome.' in today's culture they are frequently thought of as 'incapable' (Burcu, 2006). The conclusion of 'How Society Perceives Persons with Disabilities' project, which was conducted in 2009 by the Administration for Disabled People in Turkey, reflects the attitude of society towards people with disabilities within a historical perspective. According to the findings, when asked about people with disabilities, 24.2% of participants indicated that 'persons in need of help' comes to mind, while 22.9% mentioned that people with disabilities are a burden for their families (Ozurluler Idaresi Baskanligi, 2009).

The negative attitudes of teachers towards children with disabilities are formed during their training in college, or in the early years of their profession. These attitudes are very often resistant to change (Jordan et al., 2009). Studies show that teaching candidates taking lessons or courses related to people with disabilities and their education, manifest more positive attitudes than the teaching candidates who do not take any lessons or course regarding people with disabilities (Gozun & Yikmis, 2004; Shippen, Crites, Houchins, Ramsey & Simon, 2005).

Examining textbooks in terms of addressing people with disabilities is as important endeavour since the textbooks used in universities have an impact on teacher candidates' perceptions regarding educational applications. Moreover, children with disabilities are frequently characterised in a negative light in textbooks. It is possible to see a similar endeavour in a recent study by Smith (2006). Smith (2006), who analyses classroom management books in terms of their approaches towards disability, indicates that the viewpoint of society regarding disability is reflected by classroom management books used in universities. These books reflect the medical perspective of focusing on inefficacy, and this perspective fails to understand people with disabilities. Furthermore, it also classifies people with disabilities as deficient and incapable (Smith, 2000).

The present study aims to examine how classroom management textbooks that are published in Turkey approach subjects about people with disabilities. The researchers use the content analysis method in order to facilitate this investigation. The examination questions whether selected textbooks contain subjects related to people with disabilities, contains specific sections about people with disabilities, and whether individuals with disabilities were referred to based on ability or inability to focus.

2. Method

This study used content analysis in order to carry out its primary aim. Content analysis is a method that required gathering, organising and interpreting data within a framework based on similar themes (Arikan, 2005).

In the present study, 19 classroom management books that were published in Turkey and have been used as course books in universities were analyzed and classified under five titles: 1) Books mentioning students with disabilities, 2) Books having a separate chapter for students with disabilities, 3) Books offering planning/adaptation for the education of students with disabilities, 4) Books mentioning students with disabilities entitled 'the causes of undesired behaviours/behavioural problems, 5) Books focusing on the incapability of students with disabilities.

For analysis, 19 classroom management books were scrutinized in terms of the chapter, paragraphs or sentences and their approaches to students with disabilities. They have been classified according to five different titles. The first author classified all 19 books, the second author classified two books, and the third author classified six books. The reliability analysis between three authors yielded 100% reliability between first and second author and 80% reliability between first and third author.

Table 1. The classification of books in terms of addressing people with disabilities

Title of the book	Author/s	Books mentioning students with disabilities	Books with separate chapter for students with disabilities	Books offering planning/adaptation for students with disabilities	Books mentioning students with disabilities under the title of 'the causes of undesired behaviours/behavioural problems	Books focusing on incapability of students with disabilities (mentioning only students' incapacabilities, or behavioural problems hindering their learning)
Olumlu Sınıf Yönetimi	Mehmet Ozyurek (2005)	The book is completely written for classrooms that include students with disabilities				
Sınıf Yönetimi	Edit: Musa Gursel, Hakan Sari, Bulent Dilmaç (2004)		x	x		
Çağdas Sınıf Yönetimi	Aysen Bakioglu (2009)		x	x		
Sınıf Yönetiminde Kuram ve Uygulama	Cevat Celep (2008)		x	x		
Etkili Sınıf Yönetimi	Edit: Huseyin Kiran (2006)		x	x		
Okul Öncesi Eğitimde Sınıf Yönetimi	Edit: Yasare Aktas Arnas, Fatma Sadik (2008)		x	x	x	
Sınıf Yönetimi	Edit: Emin Karip (2008)	x		x		
Sınıf Yönetimi	Edit: Zeki Kaya (2008)	x		x		
Sınıf Yönetimi	Munire Erden (2008)	x				x
Sınıf Yönetimi	Edit: Leyla Kuçukahmet (2007)	x				
Sınıf Yönetimi	Sukran Kilbas Koktas (2003)	x		x	x	
Sınıf Yönetimi	Huseyin Basar (2005)	x		x	x	
2000'li Yıllarda Sınıf Yönetimi	Refik Balay (2003)	x		x	x	
İlköğretimde Sınıf Yönetimi	Edit: Mehmet Durdu Karsli (2009)					
Sınıf Yönetimi	Ayhan Aydin (2005)					
Sınıf Yönetimi	Enver Sari (2002)					
Sınıf Yönetimi	Edit: Mustafa Yilman (2006)	There is no subject about disability and people with disabilities				
Yapılandırıcı Yaklaşımla Sınıf Yönetimi	Firdevs Gunes (2007)					
Sınıf Yönetimi	Vehbi Celik (2003)					

3. Findings

In the analysis, 19 classroom management books were classified into five different categories in terms of their approaches toward people with disabilities (Table 1). The table below shows that one of those books was written completely for classrooms in which students with disabilities exist (Ozyurek, 2005). The subjects and examples in the book contain methods that can be used for all students in any classroom, regardless of their being disabled or not. Six of the examined books never mention students with disabilities, or disability per se (Aydin, 2005; Celik, 2003; Gunes, 2007; Karsli, 2009; Sari, 2002; Yilman, 2006). Seven books mention students with disabilities (Balay, 2003; Basar, 2005; Erden, 2008; Karip, 2008; Kaya, 2008; Kilbas-Koktas, 2003; Kuçukahmet, 2007). Three of those books (Balay, 2003; Basar, 2005; Kilbas-Koktas, 2003), and the one written by Aktas-Arnas and Sadik (2008), refer

to pupils with disabilities under the title of “causes of undesired behaviour/ behavioural problems,” but also offer adaptations-planning for those students.

All of the books that have separate chapters for students with disabilities, such as ‘students in need of special education’ or ‘management of special groups’ (Aktas-Arnas & Sadik, 2008; Bakioglu, 2009; Celep, 2008; Gursel, Sari, & Dilmaç, 2004; Kiran, 2006) also suggest adaptations in planning for students with disabilities. The other books that offer adaptations in planning for students with disabilities are written by Balay (2003), Basar (2005), Karip (2008), Kaya (2008) and Kilbas-Koktas (2003).

There is one book that focuses only on the incapacity of of students with disabilities, and addresses the inabilities of the students and the specific behavioural problems, which hinder their learning (Erden, 2008).

4. Discussion

In the present study, 19 classroom management books published in Turkey were examined in terms of their content relating to individuals with disabilities. The study determined that there are significant differences among these books. For example, Ozyurek’s (2005) book focused on inclusive classrooms in which students with disabilities can function. Considering the existence of students with disabilities in classrooms when preparing textbooks will have a positive impact on both teachers’ knowledge and their attitudes towards disabled students. Ozyurek’s book (2005) plays an important role in this respect.

In addition, results yielded that every book, except one book (Aktas-Arnas & Sadik, 2008), include separate chapters for students with disabilities and mention characteristics of those students and their education. Moreover, they elicit positive statements about people with disabilities (Bakioglu, 2009; Celep, 2008; Gursel, Sari, & Dilmaç, 2004; Kiran, 2006). The language used in these books conveys a strong message to teaching candidates. Namely, that they may have students with disabilities in their classrooms and they ought to know appropriate methods of education and management for such students. Furthermore, three of the books (Balay, 2003; Basar, 2005; Karip, 2008; Kaya, 2008; Kilbas-Koktas, 2003) have no separate chapters for students with disabilities, but do contain information about their characteristics and offers educational methods for those students. They also use statements that reflect negative attitudes towards people with disabilities and represent the medical perspective of focusing on their inefficacy. A similar understanding exists in Erden’s (2008) book. Although the author mentions students with disabilities, he only focuses on their negative characteristics and inabilities. Moreover, some of the books mention students with disabilities, referring to them by the title ‘the causes of undesired behavior/behavioural problems.’ Such titles also reflect the negative attitudes towards people with disabilities in language (Aktas-Arnas & Sadik, 2008; Balay, 2003; Basar, 2005; Kilbas-Koktas, 2003). Since people with disabilities are categorized under titles relating to problem behaviours, this viewpoint can be considered to be an extension of a line of thought that considers students with disabilities to be the cause of problem behaviours in classrooms.

Although the majority of the books mention students with disabilities, it is remarkable that some of those books do not consist of any information about students with disabilities (Aydin, 2005; Çelik, 2003; Gunes, 2007; Karsli, 2009; Sari, 2002; Yilman, 2006). One could conclude that these books were written for classrooms without students with disabilities. However, the fact is that teachers will not work in environments entirely devoid of disable students. Teachers will inevitably come across a disable student during their teaching careers. Textbooks that fail to include information about disable students, give the impression that teachers will only work in classrooms containing non-disable students. Since teacher’s attitudes take shape during their teacher training in college, or in the early years of their professional lives, such attitudes are resistant to change, even in spite of in Post hoc -service training. Educational facilities have an important responsibility when it comes to forming teachers’ attitudes toward their students towards, especially when it comes to viewing individuals with disabilities in positive way. Educational facilities should construct a structure that provides preparation for teaching students with disabilities, and for handling individual differences. This should be by reviewing both course content and using appropriate course books.

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