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*Full Length Research Paper*

# Evaluation of reading fluency and reading errors of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students with a view to diagnosing the sources of reading difficulties

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The purpose of this study is to identify the sources of reading difficulties and to evaluate reading fluency of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students which aims to improve students' reading and their understanding of complex literary texts. The sample is composed of 120 students selected from 9<sup>th</sup> grade of 10 different high schools in central province of Ankara in Turkey. The schools are chosen with probability-based sampling methods. Students were asked to read a text which is proposed by Turkish literature curriculum. Data was gathered using "Miscue analysis form" and "Questionnaire" as the main research tools to understand the sources of students' reading difficulties. The statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) program was used for data analysis. According to findings, it was seen that students have reading difficulties even though they are 9<sup>th</sup> grade students. The results showed that students read inaccurately and they do not pay attention to punctuation marks. It can be also said students with low reading fluency have low competency. The result of this study indicates that most of the teachers who were participated in this study do not assess their students' reading performance and they do not have any analysis form for assessing students' reading performance.

**Key words:** Reading, literature education, fluent reading, reading errors, reading instruction.

## INTRODUCTION

Reading and writing are the most basic and needed skills when children start going to school. Reading is a complex process that requires visual perception ability, comprehension ability and prior knowledge (Miller, 1993). Students who are not reading at the same level as their peers are referred to as "struggling older readers", "poor readers" or "students with reading difficulties" (Whithear, 2011). A study indicates that primary school students could not understand 70 words out of 100 words text they read whereas high school students could not understand

50 words and they read again (Coşkun, 2002). Therefore, high school students may also have reading problems, while schools and ministry of education expect grade-level achievement.

High school curriculum requires synthesizing more information in less time than secondary curriculum (National joint committee on learning disabilities, 2008). The innovations that have been developed to build fluency and reduce the reading errors originate in the primary levels. New approaches do not consider the

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complexities of the secondary curriculum nor the high school (Joseph and Schisler, 2009). In addition, a misconception among educators is that fluency could be improved by reading more (Pikulski and Chard, 2005). However, studies have shown that older students need to be taught with expert instruction in order to overcome fluency problem (Rasinski et al., 2009).

Consequently, the causes of reading difficulties should be diagnosed to prevent these problems arising in the first place. In this study, we determined seven factors of reading difficulties as follows: visual, hereditary and environmental, socio-cultural, cognitive, language, emotional and educational.

### **Visual factors**

Visual problems involved in reading have led people to assume a connection between reading disability and abnormal eye functions. Although there is no relationship between vision defects such as myopia (nearsightedness), astigmatism (blurred vision resulting from lack of a clear focus of light rays in one or more axes of the retina), and amblyopia (a condition in which the image from one eye is not transmitted to the brain) which results to reading difficulties (McCormick and Jerry, 2010), children still need help to learn new reading strategies after these visual problems are corrected. According to Miller, perception is “the interpretation of incoming sensations by the brain which selects, groups, organizes and sequences them” (1993: 201). There are some training programs for the improvement of visual perception ability, but research has shown that they don't increase reading ability of the students who have been exposed to them (Miller, 1993).

### **Hereditary and environmental factors**

Some researchers believe that reading disability is inherited (Matheny et al., 1976). Most educators believe that both biological and environmental factors influence learning. In some cases, the reason seems hereditary yet; it may be an environmental factor. Children who have natural facility with language may encourage adults to read more for them, so the children are active in this case. On the other hand, children with less natural facility in language may not be good readers even though they grow up in rich educational environment. Research indicates that school conditions have more effect on learning than family characteristics (Aikens and Barbarin, 2008).

### **Socio-cultural factors**

Socio-cultural factors are also among other factors related to poor reading achievement. In spite of diversity

in reading and teaching reading, there is a unity among the cultures around the world. This unity makes strategies and approaches of teaching reading easy to understand for every culture. Gender difference is the part of socio-cultural factors. Vogel (1990) reports that females with reading difficulties that necessitate clinical diagnosis and a remedial had more severe cognitive deficits than males. Also, these females had more serious learning problems than males.

### **Cognitive factors**

Cognitive factors include intelligence and cognitive styles which have effect on children's learning. As we know, there is a relationship between children's intelligence and reading achievement. Intelligence is the combination of individuals' potential and environmental conditions. Thus, low intellectual ability doesn't necessarily cause reading disability. In early reading process, students' prior experiences are more important than intelligence, but in the later primary grades, intellectual ability becomes important to reading achievement (McCormick and Jerry, 2010). The students who have been read to in preschool years may come to school having familiarity with book language and oral language vocabularies of those who have been read to regularly. These children are likely to do much better in reading. Children with below average intellectual ability may have difficulties with comprehension in later primary grades. These students need a slow introduction to reach their individual potentials.

### **Language factors**

Reading is a linguistic skill. The deficiencies in semantic, syntactic or phonological aspects of language have been found to be related to reading disability. Students who have limited vocabulary may have difficulties in learning to identify printed words. It is not easy to understand for children that words are made up of letters and these letters matches with the sounds. Although young children talk in words, syllables and phonemes, they do not seem to have much initial conscious control over these units of language. In order to learn how to read and spell one must discover that units of letters or letter groups are made up of speech sound. Thus, the understanding of the alphabetic principle requires the ability to segment the speech stream into units of phoneme size. This understanding is called phonemic awareness. The lack of phonemic awareness causes word identification difficulties (Vellutino and Denckla, 1991). The primary difficulties with words may lead to secondary consequences, such as poor reading comprehension, slow vocabulary development, slow general learning in school, low motivation for reading. The relationship among phonological awareness, oral language and reading is directional. Phonemic awareness improves children's

acquisition of reading and spelling while increasing literacy skills develops phonological insight.

### Emotional factors

Emotional situation of the students is very important for the child success in reading. While trying to increase their reading capabilities, students' self-esteem provides a very important support. In fact, there is a two-way relationship between success level and emotional situation. A student who is well adjusted to learning will be more successful than the one who is not and this will affect his/her emotions positively.

### Educational factors

Educational factors are among the most common causes of reading disabilities in schools. Teachers' instruction is not the only source of these problems. There are various factors that can lead to reading problems. First of all, teachers should increase their learning about the reading process because lack of research information may lead to wasted time (McCormick and Jerry, 2010). Students learn more when the instruction is related to their academic needs. Sometimes reading instruction is presented rapidly without reinforcement of words and phonic elements. Therefore, students cannot learn the basic skills before learning additional reading skills.

Inappropriate reading materials and techniques are among the other factors that cause children to dislike reading. Another common educational factor that causes reading difficulties is presenting a formal reading program before the child is ready. This may not be destructive for children with well-developed emergent literacy skills, but it may impact the children who learn slowly and who don't have prior knowledge. Besides the reasons mentioned above, school characteristics are also important in reading process. The number of students may interrupt the management of the class and disallow students to benefit from the activities. Several researches showed that students' learning problems are related to class size (Adıgüzel and Karacabey, 2010; Yaman, 2009; Seven and Engin, 2006).

In this paper, the primary concern is that high school students do not read fluently at the expected level and they do mistakes while reading. Resolving these reading problems enables students to comprehend more complex literary texts. This study aims to evaluate the reading fluency level of high school students with reading problems and diagnose the sources of reading errors to factors affecting reading performance in terms of reading difficulties.

### Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to identify the sources of

reading difficulties and reading fluency of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students and therefore, their understanding of complex literary texts.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research design

This is a descriptive research in the survey model. According to Karasar (2005), scanning model is a research approach which aims to define a past or present situation without making any change (Karasar, 2009: 77).

### Sample

The population of the study is 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in high schools of ministry of education in central province of Ankara in 2011 to 2012 academic periods. The sample is composed of 120 9<sup>th</sup> grade students from 10 different high schools. Of the 120 students in the study, 67 were female and 53 were male. The schools are chosen with probability-based sampling methods.

### Research instruments

Miscue analysis form and questionnaire are used as the main research approach to understand the sources of students' reading difficulties. In order to identify students' reading difficulties, "Köpek" (The Dog), a story of Refik Halit Karay is used as reading text (Karay, 2000). The name of this author is proposed as a representative in Turkish literature curriculum to explain national Turkish Era (curriculum of Turkish literature, 2011, 14). In order to determine students' reading errors, "Miscue analysis form" is used. (Weaver, 1994: 255; Weaver, 2009). Then the errors are grouped into 6 titles (grapho-phonetic visual, grapho-phonetic auditory, semantic, syntactic, non-response and correction). "Oral reading fluency assessment" is a quick, reliable and valid assessment tool for diagnosing students' reading fluency (Rasinski, 2004). According to the result of the assessment, students were grouped into three levels: independent, instruction and frustration (Weaver, 1994). In questionnaire, students' were asked personal information regarding their parents' socioeconomic status, reading interest and reading attitude.

### The validity and reliability of research instruments

The story for reading assessment is chosen from the recommended reading list of "100 fundamental literary works" which is formed by the ministry of education. Also, the story was read by 5 literature teachers from ministry of education and 2 professors from Turkish literature education department. A pilot study was carried out to see whether reading errors were significant so as to affect students' reading comprehension. Expert opinion was also examined for the validity of the questionnaire. Questionnaire was revised in line with the opinions of faculty members. Reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.91.

### Procedure

The reading text has been read by 120 students. First, the reading level of accuracy was identified by using oral reading fluency (Rasinski, 2004) assessment method. A chronometer was used to measure the time. The teacher listens to the student reading the



**Table 1.** Students' reading Accuracy according to their gender

Accuracy rate	Female		Male	
	n	%	n	%
89 and below	17	25.3	20	37.7
90 to 94	22	32.8	19	35.9
95 to 100	28	41.9	14	26.4
Total	67	100	53	100

story for one minute. The words students were able to achieve at the end of the one minute were marked. After the students complete reading the text, the total number of words read, the number of words read correctly, and the numbers of uncorrected errors were recorded. According to these recording, students are assigned to independent, instruction and frustration groups.

### Data analysis

To identify the students' reading errors, miscue analysis form was used. The students' reading accuracy and reading errors were marked when they were reading aloud. Then errors which were noticed from the reading were identified to recognize the source of reading difficulties. The data obtained in questionnaire were also analyzed using descriptive analysis, SPSS 16 (Statistical package for the social sciences).

## FINDINGS AND COMMENTS

The text read by students in this study is made up of 840 words. When the reading fluency rates of students participated in the study are analyzed, it is seen that 42 students read 138 words a minute while 41 students read 101 words a minute, and 37 students read 92 words a minute. The mean fluency rate was 111.18 words a minute which is below the norms for 9<sup>th</sup> grade level.

According to students' accuracy rates, they are classified into three levels. 42 students who read with 95 to 100% accuracy were classified in "independent group", 41 students who read with 90 to 94 accuracy were classified in "instruction group", and 37 students who read with 89% and lower accuracy were classified in "frustration group". These results show that 37 students covering 30.8 % of total participants make a lot of errors and it is considered that the text is too difficult for those students compared to the level of high school students who are expected to read complex literary texts. 41 students covering 34.2 % of total participants used context to predict despite the miscues. 35 % of 120 9<sup>th</sup> grade students are at independent level, however this result is below half of the students participated in this study. Another study which is applied to 10<sup>th</sup> grade students indicates that the students read a text which is made up of 264 words in 116.9 seconds, and they read 135.5 words in 60 seconds. However this is only the reading speed. They can read and comprehend 54.9

words in 60 seconds (Dökmen, 1990, 405).

Coşkun (2002) found a significant difference among students' silent reading fluency according to their environment, socioeconomic status and reading habit. The reading accuracy of students from low socioeconomic status was 129.9 words a minute while the reading accuracy of students from middle socioeconomic status was 138.4 words a minute, and the reading accuracy of students from high socioeconomic status was 177.3 words a minute. The mean fluency rate of the students who participated in the study was 147.7 words a minute. These results indicate that reading rates of all these groups are below the norms of high school level (Yalçın, 2006).

Rasinski et al. (2005) found strong correlation between fluency and overall reading proficiency among ninth graders. Moreover, the study indicates a significant number of students were below norms for fluency. Valley and Shriver studied with four high school students who read at least 30 to 50 words per minute below their friends. After ten weeks with ten hours of practice, three of the students read 20 to 40 words per minute faster. The one-fourth read 10 words per minute faster (Valley and Shriver, 2003). Thus, poor readers at the middle and high school level need instructional interventions to increase their reading fluency. Findings elicited from the questionnaire applied to 9<sup>th</sup> grade high school students were given in this section. Students' reading accuracy according to the gender is given in Table 1.

As it was stated in socio-cultural factors, gender difference has effect on reading performance. As it is seen in Table 1, 41% of female students are in the independent group while only 26.4% of male students are in that group.

The education status of parents is an important factor on students' reading level. Parents with high socioeconomic status help to create a positive literacy environment to their children. Students' reading accuracy, according to their parents' educational status, is shown in Table 2. When the educational level of mothers of the students who took part in the research is analyzed, it is seen that 29 students' mothers are primary school graduate, 33 students' mothers are secondary school graduate, 43 students' mothers are high school graduate, 11 students' mothers are university graduate and finally 4 students' mothers have graduate or doctor's degree. 51.7% of students whose mothers have primary school degree are in the frustration group whereas the share of independent group is 13.8. The share of independent group is 45.5 % among students whose mothers are university graduate in the independent.

10 students' fathers are primary school graduate, 15 students' fathers are secondary school graduate, 47 students' fathers are high school graduate, 40 students' fathers are university graduate and finally 8 students' fathers have graduate or doctor's degree. 50 % of students whose fathers are primary school graduate are

**Table 2.** Students' reading accuracy according to their parents' educational status

Accuracy Rate		89 and below		90-94		95-100		total
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n
Mother	Primary	15	51.7	10	34.5	4	13.8	29
	secondary	10	30.3	11	33.3	12	36.4	33
	High school	8	18.6	18	41.9	17	39.5	43
	undergraduate	4	36.3	2	18.2	5	45.5	11
	Graduate	-	-	-	-	4		4
	Total	37		41		42		120
Father	Primary	5	50	3	30	2	20	10
	secondary	6	40	6	40	3	20	15
	High school	15	31.9	18	38.3	14	29.8	47
	undergraduate	9	22.5	10	25	21	52.5	40
	Graduate	2	25	4	50	2	25	8
	Total	37		41		42		120

**Table 3.** Students' reading accuracy and visual problems

Accuracy Rate	yes		sometimes		no	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
89 and below	6	40	11	44	20	25
90 to 94	7	46.7	8	32	26	32.5
95 to100	2	13.3	6	24	34	42.5
Total	15	100	25	100	80	100

**Table 4.** Students' reading accuracy and their parents' reading problems

Accuracy rate	yes		no	
	n	%	n	%
89 and below	18	47.4	19	23.2
90 to 94	13	34.2	28	34.1
95 to 100	7	18.4	35	42.7
Total	38	100	82	100

in the frustration group whereas 52.5 % of students whose fathers have graduate degree are in the independent group. As a result, education level of students' fathers and mothers is low for the students in the frustration group and it is high for the students in the independent group. (Table 3)

A connection is assumed to exist between students' reading difficulties and visual problems. Thus, the students were asked whether they have visual problems or not. 42.5 % of the students who are in the independent group have no visual problem while 13.4 % of those responded that they have visual problems. Thus as the level of fluently decreases, the share of the students who

have visual problems increases. The ophthalmologists minimize the effect of vision deficits on reading skill and state that there is currently no evidence that vision therapy is necessary for children who has visual problems. The studies argue about vision deficits and efficacy of therapies, however there are also researches adducing that visual efficiency and disorders have an impact on learning difficulties (Lack, 2010).

Yalçın (2006), states that after the regulation of the rhythmic movement of eye muscles through training, an adult could have a clarity zone in a period of time which is 1/100% of a second. Thus, the adults could see approximately 15 words in this period of time. With a good training, one could read one thousand words in a minute (Yalçın, 2006). Therefore, visual efficiency has considerable impact on reading process.

As it is seen in Table 4, 82 students said that their parents do not have reading problems. Within this, the share of independent group is 42.7 %. While the instruction group's share is 34.1 %, and that of frustration group is 23.2 %. According to this result, it can be said that parents' reading accuracy affects reading accuracy of their children. Elbro et al. (1998) research with Danish families indicates that the children whose parents had severe reading difficulties had an increased risk of having

**Table 5.** Students' reading accuracy and their parents' reading habits

Accuracy Rate	2 or more in a month		1 in a month		1 in 2 months or less		never	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
89 and below	19	32.8	8	27.6	4	20	6	46.1
90 to 94	18	31.0	11	37.9	9	45	3	23.1
95 to100	21	36.2	10	34.5	7	35	4	30.8
Total	58	100	29	100	20	100	13	100

**Table 6.** Students' reading accuracy and their feelings on reading

Accuracy Rate	yes		no		sometimes	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
89 and below	13	22.8	19	47.5	5	21.7
90 to 94	21	36.8	12	30	8	34.8
95 to 100	23	40.4	9	22.5	10	43.5
Total	57	100	40	100	23	100

**Table 7.** Students' reading accuracy and the frequency of going to the library

Accuracy Rate	yes		no		sometimes	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
89 and below	15	22.4	14	73.7	8	23.5
90 to 94	23	34.3	4	21	14	41.2
95 to100	29	43.3	1	5.3	12	35.3
total	67	100	19	100	34	100

severe reading problems themselves. Thus, it can be stated that dyslexia is determined by a large number of genes. The other indicators of students' success in reading are the environment at home, parents' approach to reading and their guidance to their children. Table 5 students' reading accuracy and their parents reading habits,

Students' reading achievement is correlated with home literacy environment and the number of books owned (Aikens and Barbarin, 2008). The result of this study indicates that students whose family read regularly have high reading level. Students with parents who read 2 or more books in a month make up 36.2 % of students in the independent group while the students whose parents do not read any book at all has 46.1 % share in the frustration group. Table 6 students' accuracy and their feelings on reading.

The share of independent group in students who like reading is 40.4% while the frustration group makes up 47.5 % of students who do not like reading. The independent group has the highest percentage of students who said that they like reading. This means, students' interest in reading affects their reading level.

Dökmen, showed in his study that students from low socioeconomic status have higher interest in reading than students from high socioeconomic status (1990: 408). A study about 10th grade high school students indicates that 87.5 % of the participants spend 0-3 hours for reading in a day. The test of higher education is a significant reason for this limited time; hence their reading materials are mostly text books and test materials (Beydoğan, 2009).

As it is seen in Table 7, 43.3 % of the students that go to library is from the independent group. The share of frustration group in total number of the students who do not go to the library is 73.7 %. From this, we can infer that reading level is also related to going to the library. Table 8 shows the Students' reading accuracy according to teachers' type of instruction

Students were asked whether their teachers use different reading instructions in Turkish literature class or not. 65 students replied that their teachers do not use different instructions. 27 students stated that their teachers use different instructions, and 28 students think that it sometimes occurs. We can imply that more than half of the students who took part in this study think that

**Table 8.** Students' reading accuracy according to teachers' type of instruction

Accuracy Rate	yes		no		sometimes	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
89 and under	10	37.0	17	26.1	10	35.7
90 to 94	11	40.8	20	30.8	10	35.7
95 to100	6	22.2	28	43.1	8	28.6
total	27	100	65	100	28	100

**Table 9.** Students' reading accuracy according to teachers' assessment for reading

Accuracy rate	yes		No	
	n	%	n	%
89 and below	5	25	32	32
90 to 94	9	45	32	32
95 to100	6	30	36	36
Total	20	100	100	100

their teachers instruct in the same manner. Yet, teachers' experience and quality of teaching affect students' academic achievement (Gimbert et al., 2007).

Secondary school teachers expect their students to comprehend the deeper meaning of written text without having difficulty in word recognition (Topping, 2006). Thus, students were asked if their teachers assess their reading regularly. The number and percentage of students according to their answers are shown in Table 9. 100 of 120 students expressed that their teachers do not regularly assess their reading. 36 % of those are in independent group, 32% of those are in instruction group, and 32% of those are in frustration group. The number of students who think that their teachers use assessments for reading is only 20 students. As a result, the teachers of the students who participated in this study do not regularly assess students' reading in Turkish literature class. Fluency is a significant component of reading process and it is associated with comprehension. Thus, national reading panel also recommended that teachers assess fluency regularly (NICHD, 2000). Table 10, Shows the students' reading errors according to their reading performance.

Reading errors made most frequently by the students were reading without attention to punctuation, stress and intonation followed by incorrect reading, syllable repetition, word repetition and word omission. Although high school students are expected to read fluently, letter substitution was 4.2 %, letter insertion 25%, letter-syllable omission is 41.7 %. Some miscues would be considered having graphic similarity if one of the syllables of a word is similar to the text printed word in a visual or auditory way. Because of the makeup of the word even when no letters are common to the miscue, it may be considered

as graphic similarity. Otherwise, a miscue is of no graphic similarity when the printed word and the pronounced word do not have any common letters. In addition, some miscues would sound syntactically or semantically correct. First, miscue should be examined whether it sounds like a sentence the reader might produce in his/her dialect of the language in which the text appears or not. Second, it should be asked if it makes sense or not. If the student's reading of the sentence does not change its meaning, it is considered semantic error.

For this reason, reading errors were diagnosed according to six categories (grapho-phonoc visual, grapho-phonoc auditory, semantic, syntactic, non-response and correction). Substitution and incorrect reading errors were separated into visual or auditory consideration. If the error presents a grammatical problem, it is considered syntactic error. When the rest of the sentence does not make sense because of wrong substitution, it is considered as a semantic error. The total of these errors are shown in Table 11.

As it is shown in Table 11, students in this study made semantic errors while reading aloud. Although they can read fluently, their recognition process is inaccurate. They cannot read accurately even though they should not have any reading problem at 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Not only the substitution of words, but also the rest of the sentence does not make sense as a result of errors.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, reading difficulties and reading fluency were discussed by assessing students' reading process in all aspects from visual deficits and genes to socio-cultural contexts and educational conditions. Reading is a multi-dimensional concept, so it has several levels. If these levels are analyzed at the same time, students' reading difficulties can be understood easily.

Children differ in many areas. They have different learning abilities even though they have same social and educational opportunities, so reading difficulties are determined individually and biologically. Reading difficulties in beginning readers caused by experiential and instructional deficits rather than by basic cognitive deficits; however, some of the impaired readers may be afflicted by basic cognitive deficits, especially

**Table 10.** Students' reading errors according to their reading performance. The errors are listed in categories to diagnose the sort of reading difficulties.

Reading errors	Number of students (n)	Percentage of students (%)
Letter insertion	30	25
Letter-syllable omission	50	41.7
Letter substitution	5	4.2
Syllable repetition	58	48.3
Incorrect word reading	74	61.7
Word repetition	56	46.7
Word omission	54	45
Lack of attention to punctuation	85	70.8
Lack of attention to stress and intonation	95	79.2
Losing or omitting a line	25	20.8
Self correction	34	28.3
Pausing more than two seconds	32	26.7

**Table 11.** Students' reading errors according to categories

Type of error	Number of errors	Percentage of total errors
Grapho-phonetic visual	12	7.9
Grapho-phonetic auditory	2	1.3
Semantic	57	37.5
Syntactic	15	9.9
Non-response	32	21
Correction	34	22.4
Total	152	100

phonological deficits. Semantic and syntactic deficits are not primary cause of reading for normal readers. Some students who have a limited vocabulary do not understand the prosodic features used in order to comprehend the meaning, and the text becomes just a meaningless script for them. Moreover, poor reading is generally not caused by eye problems. It is clear that most important difficulty in reading is phonemic awareness.

The students, who are slow to learn about the relationship between letters and sounds, and between groups of letters and sounds, are bound to fall behind in learning to read. On the other hand, a failure in school will result in low self-image or maladjustment. While they enter school or start learning, students are generally emotionally well prepared. They are more inclined to be successful. From this perspective, it is vital to determine the problems at the early stages of learning process. If not dealt with in time, small reading problems of the beginning phase may lead to emotional problems. This could result in the worsening of the reading difficulties, which may again lead to the worsening of the emotional problems. In some cases, students may behave passively, become disinterested, in others, they may be aggressive. However, in most cases, the reading capabilities could be improved by a combination of counseling

and better reading programs. Sometimes students may have deep-rooted problems and resist to the improvements. In that case, the solution of such problems may not be directly related to reading and they have to be taken care of by necessary psychological approaches.

Also, the techniques that are used during the reading activities must be appropriate to the reading materials and students' reading levels. The time spent on reading must be well organized to make students benefit from every activity. If the teacher manages the classroom, students can learn what they need. The number of the students in classes may affect this management; however, if teachers use the time effectively, they can reach every student in the class. To be successful in dealing with reading disabilities, new assessments and interventions must be investigated. Many reading difficulties can be corrected in their initial stages by the classroom teachers when correction is easy. For this reason, remedial programs must be provided to correct these difficulties.

### Conflict of Interests

The author(s) have not declared any conflict of interests.

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*Full Length Research Paper*

# Determination of the needs of university students for psychological counseling and guidance services: The case of Kocaeli University, Turkey

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The purpose of the study is to explain the needs of the students of Kocaeli University (KOU) for psychological counseling and guidance (PCG) services. KOU students constituted the population of the study and 6662 students chosen to represent minimum 10% of the total student number in all academic units from the same population constituted. A survey on the determination of the needs of university students for PCG Services", developed by researchers, was used as a data collection tool. As a result of this study, the survey developed to determine the needs of students attending Kocaeli university for PCG services was evaluated in terms of three parts including expected PCG services, existing status of pupil personnel services and need for individual counseling. It can be stated that students studying at KOU need guidance and psychological counseling services when compared in terms of gender, class levels and studying in or off the campus. It is thought that a guidance and psychological counseling center to be opened for this purpose can provide a systematic assistance for such demands of the students.

**Key words:** University students, PCG services, pupil personnel services.

## INTRODUCTION

University life provides the youth with rich opportunities in terms of gaining independence, discovering their own potentials, self-development, job acquisition, improvement of living conditions and preparation for the next development period (Türküm, 2007). The youth starting university are in adolescence period in terms of development and are treated sometimes as children and sometimes as adults in their environment. Despite this, the most important developmental mission expected from them is to be able to be autonomous. There are two basic needs in priority in terms of guidance services:

- (1) Basic needs which are valid in every period of life and required to be constantly satisfied.
- (2) Developmental needs specific to different life stages (Yeşilyaprak, 2001).

Being a student at university and university life have the characteristic of an environment that will produce anxiety and stress both in our country and in the other countries. A university student is a person experiencing problems pertinent to his development period. A university student is neither a child nor an adult (İnanç et al., 2004).

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A university environment constitutes a setting creating stress for the youth who are still in identity formation period. It is a known fact that there is a need for qualified human resource. For these reasons, universities, undertaking to train qualified human resource, should also find the source of their problems and seek remedies for the development of their personalities as well as giving their students knowledge, skills, ideals and good habits. A university environment is a setting having demands and expectations a person cannot get through with the values, attitudes and habits he has gained until that day. This situation is even more dramatic for the youth coming from small settlements to big cities. In many researches performed on university students, it is stated that while the needs of students mostly intensify on academic, vocational and psychological problems, the needs may vary depending on the students' socio-economic statuses, genders, socio-cultural trends and the cultures or sub-cultures they belong to (Papalia et al., 1998).

University students have a lot of daily life difficulties such as; specifically coping with being dilatory, public speaking anxiety, career uncertainty, efficient study skills, lack of motivation, self-confidence issues, exam anxiety, fear of failure, depression, problems experienced in the relationships with the opposite sex and time management. (Gallagher et al., 1992; Nicholas et al., 2012). Similarly, while Nicholas (2002) mentions problems such as; fear of failure, coping with being dilatory, depression, discomfort in social surroundings and coping with loneliness among the university students in South Africa. Arco et al. (2005) state that problems are experienced in academic/educational PCG issues such as; efficient study skills, focusing attention, time management and exam anxiety among the Spanish university students.

As a result of the examination of the studies conducted by various researchers in the collected work on the problems and needs of the university youth Türküm (2007) carried out, it was concluded that the students had financial difficulties, employment problems, problems related to the adaptation to the university and inability to find the support they needed, problems related to academic achievement, accommodation, education, relationships with the opposite sex, longing for family, career planning, identity seeking and stress.

Guidance and psychological counseling services in higher education first came into force in Turkey in 1973. Under the law, academic advisers are expected to accept students at certain hours at least two days a week and provide the necessary assistance. Students with mental illnesses are given psychotherapeutic help in medico-social centers established by this law. Coming into force in 1982, The higher education law numbered 2547 stipulated providing students with guidance and psychological counseling services as well as health, cultural and sports services. In the 49<sup>th</sup> article of the law exists the quote "Universities establish guidance and psychological

counseling centers" in order to make it possible for these services to be carried out. Currently, these services are usually carried out at directorates of health, culture and sports, the previous name of which was medico-social centers, in accordance with the long standing understanding (Kuzgun, 2000, p.220).

While there are teaching and management services in traditional education, a third dimension; pupil personnel services have been added to contemporary education (Altıntaş, 2004, p.3). Guidance services in higher education institutions functioning by coming under the units to be created by the name "pupil personnel services" is considered useful for students. Pupil personnel services in higher education provide functional benefits in many aspects such as; matriculation, accommodation, nutrition, exams, academic standing, grades, health, sports, social activities, psychological counseling, etc. (Baysal, 2004, p.52).

The objective in the psychological support given to the students in higher education is not only the relief of disorder and the treatment of disease but it is also to support the healthy identity development. The vocational identity the students will gain through the higher education program they are placed in is also in question in that identity development. In this regard, generally more than half of the students placed in higher education programs state that they are not satisfied with the programs they attend in the first months. The rate of the satisfied ones increases towards the end of the year. However, the number of the students whose dissatisfaction continues and who apply for the exam again to change their fields is not low. It is recognized that the old understanding that a youth enrolled in higher education has chosen his profession, and so no longer needs professional guidance is invalid. The biggest problem of the university students is to be able to find a job related to their fields after completing their studies.

One aspect of vocational counseling is educational counseling. Activities such as orientation, assistance to cope with exam anxiety and development of efficient study skills in educational counseling make it easy for students to know the educational institutions they attend, to see the courses they will study and the practices they will perform as a whole, to get used to the academic setting in a shorter time and to adopt to the environment more. Such educational PCG services provide students with the opportunity to make use of their energy and time more efficiently. When the services to be given to students to contribute to the personality development of individuals and the effectiveness of higher education are assessed as a whole, the following subheadings can be listed:

1. Promoting the university campus and the city, enlightening the students about the functioning of the university,



2. Giving information about efficient study skills,
3. Assisting them to cope with exam anxiety,
4. Dealing with students with current problems and providing individual psychological counseling service if required,
5. Assisting those who are discontent with the program they have started and want to transfer to another program in field selection,
6. Creating opportunities for extracurricular activities and giving information about the existing ones,
7. Providing job seeking skills to senior students to enable them to find a job when they graduate,
8. Organizing group counseling to help them create a healthy identity and values system,
9. Helping them establish clubs and communities,
10. Enabling them to develop a healthy vocational self-concept to make it possible for them to be able to be successful in their fields.

When the body literature related to the changes in the last 2 decades is examined, the findings regarding the facts that interuniversity competition has increased, that there is a dramatic increase in the rate of the students with psychological problems (Simpson and Ferguson, 2012), that a multi-cultural understanding has been started to be needed in PCG services (Patterson, 1996), that the needs of the students for prevention-based group studies as well as individual counseling have increased, that PCG centers with more qualified personnel are required (Kitzrow, 2009; Kraft, 2011), that the needs related to the problems experienced with respect to business ethics, crisis response and career counseling have come to the fore (Fouad et al., 2006; Litoiu and Oproiu, 2012; Gizir, 2010) stand out. In this context, specific determination of the needs of their own students by each university is of great importance. As a matter of fact, Erkan et al. (2011) and Gizir (2010) emphasized the importance of the determination of the PCG services to be given at universities within the needs of the relevant university.

Significant changes occur in the roles and functions of university PCG centers in parallel with the developments mentioned above. Boyd et al. (2003) point out that current university PCG centers have three main roles. The first of these roles is providing psychological counseling and psychotherapy services for the university students experiencing academic, vocational and developmental difficulties or psychological problems. The second is carrying out preventive studies to provide support to the university students respecting identifying and teaching the basic life skills in order for them to reach their educational, vocational and life purposes effectively. The third role is diversifying and developing consultancy and preventive/developmental programs to support the healthy growth and development of the students.

With this study, it was aimed to determine the needs of

the students of Kocaeli University, providing education opportunity to 61,000 students at different locations in the academic year 2012 to 2013, for PCG services in the personal, educational and vocational dimensions. In line with this purpose, the answers to the following questions were searched for:

1. Do the needs expectations of KOU students for PCG services vary according to gender?
2. Do the needs expectations of KOU students for PCG services vary according to class level?
3. Do the needs expectations of KOU students for PCG services vary according to the status of receiving education in or off the campus?

It is thought that the findings obtained as a result of the research questions will particularly help the youth who preferred Kocaeli University to grow as individuals who are beneficial and will contribute to the society and they will make a significant contribution to the preparation of the programs for PCG services. It is also thought that the findings of this study, realized at a state university with a large number of students with different characteristics, will be guiding in the regulations to be carried out in the field of PCG services at the other universities in our country.

## METHODOLOGY

A research is a descriptive study. The aim of research is to determine the needs of university students for psychological counseling and guidance services. Therefore comparative study of the relational model types are used.

### Collection of data

KOU students constituted the population of the study and 6622 students chosen to represent minimum 10% of the total student number in all academic units from the same population constituted the sample. 43.34% of those students were female (2870 people), 56.65% were male (3752 people), 28.94% were in 17 to 20 age range (1917 people), 58.81% were in 21 to 24 age range (3895 people), 8.63% were in 25 to 28 age range (572 people), 3.59% were 29 and over (238 people). In the scope of the study, minimum 10% of the students studying for associate, bachelor's and master degrees at total 43 academic units of Kocaeli university filled in the questionnaire. As a data collection tool "the survey on the determination of the needs of university students for PCG services", developed by researchers was used.

Body of literature was examined in the first stage of survey development and vocational, educational and personal guidance features in the field of psychological counseling and guidance were determined. 600 students taking pedagogical formation were lectured on vocational, educational and personal guidance in the scope of the counseling course in the separation of the fields of science and social science, where open-ended questions would be asked. Then, three open-ended questions were asked in writing to this group. The questions directed to the students; "What are the things you think are adequate/inadequate at KOU in the name of

**Table 1.** Average, minimum, maximum and standard deviation values of the needs expectations for pcg services

Dimensions	N	Min.	Max.	M	df
1 <sup>st</sup> Dimension: Expected PCG Services	6622	6.0	30.0	21.20	5,92
2 <sup>nd</sup> Dimension: Status of Pupil Personnel Services	6622	6.0	30.0	11.75	4,57
3 <sup>rd</sup> Dimension: Need for Individual Counseling	6622	6.0	30.0	14.27	5,31

personal guidance and what are your solution suggestions?, What are the things you think are adequate/inadequate at KOU in the name of vocational guidance and what are your solution suggestions?, What are the things you think are adequate/inadequate at KOU in the name of educational guidance and what are your solution suggestions?" were asked open-endedly. In the analysis of the answers to the questions, content analysis method was adopted. As a result of the analysis, the situations stated most frequently for each dimension were grouped under certain headings. Besides, the first form of the survey, including 40 items, was developed in accordance with the findings acquired as a result of the qualitative analysis, which was realized by three researchers, of the audio recordings which were obtained from the focus group discussions for 10 people conducted with students in the academic units of Kocaeli University. Then, corrections were made in some items of the survey by 3 PCG specialists together with 1 program development specialist.

The organized survey was administered to 617 students studying in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades at the faculty of education in order to determine the construct validity of the survey, and explanatory factor analysis (EFA) was applied to the acquired data. In the implementation of EFA, principal components analysis method and Varimax rotation method were used. As a result of EFA, it was determined that the survey reduced to 18 items had three parts including the need for PCG services, the status of pupil personnel services and the need for individual counseling. The 18-item-survey explains the 45.62% of the total variance. It was determined that variance rates explained on the basis of dimensions were 17.57% for "expected PCG services" (1<sup>st</sup> part), 15.39% for "status of pupil personnel services" (2<sup>nd</sup> part) and 12.67% for "need for individual counseling" (3<sup>rd</sup> part). It was determined that the 1<sup>st</sup> part was represented with 6 items and their factor loads ranged between .607 and .803, the 2<sup>nd</sup> part included 6 items and their factor loads ranged between .623 and .730, 3<sup>rd</sup> part also included 6 items and the factor loads of the items ranged between .513 and .710. Expert opinion was received for the content validity of the survey. Cronbach alpha coefficient for the reliability of the survey was calculated as .613 for the whole of the survey, .814 for the 1<sup>st</sup> dimension, .769 for the 2<sup>nd</sup> dimension and .769 for the 3<sup>rd</sup> dimension. The minimum point that can be obtained from each dimension of the scale is 6 and the maximum point is 30. The average point to be obtained from each dimension is 18.

The survey was opened to students through Kocaeli University Student Information System after the Fall semester final exams of the academic year 2012 to 2013 had finished and was closed in the second week of the spring semester. Within this period, total 6622 students representing minimum 10% of each academic unit filled in the survey on voluntary basis.

### Analysis of data

In data analysis, percentage and frequency were used for descriptive statistics and independent group t test was used in order to determine whether the answers given to the research questions varied according to some variables. Analyses in the study

were performed using statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS 15).

## RESULTS

The following findings have been reached in this research carried out to determine the needs of Kocaeli university students for PCG services:

1. What are the needs expectation levels of KOU students for PDR services?

Average, minimum, maximum and standard deviation values of the needs expectations for PCG services are shown in Table 1. In the light of the data in Table 1, it has been concluded that; the students have a positive perception about "expected PCG services" ( $\bar{x}$ = 21.20), in terms of "status of Pupil Personnel Services", they find the implementations conducted for the pupil personnel services of the university inadequate ( $\bar{x}$ = 11.75), in terms of "need for individual counseling", their levels of the needs for individual counseling are low ( $\bar{x}$ =12.27).

2. Do the needs expectations of KOU students for PCG services vary "according to gender"?

The results of the independent group t test for the determination of whether the needs expectations for PCG services vary according to gender or not are shown in Table 2. In the light of the data in Table 2, it is observed that according to gender; there is a significant difference in favor of the females [ $t_{(6620)} = 7.182, p < .005$ ] in terms of "Expected PCG Services", there is a significant difference in favor of the males [ $t_{(6620)} = -2.804, p < .005$ ] in terms of "Status of Pupil Personnel Services", there is a significant difference in favor of the males [ $t_{(6620)} = -3.339, p < .005$ ] in terms of "Need for Individual Counseling".

3. Do the needs expectations of KOU students for PCG services vary "according to class level"?

The results of the independent group t test for the determination of whether the needs expectations for PCG services vary according to class level or not are shown in Table 3. In the light of the data in Table 3, it is observed that according to class level; there is no significant difference [ $t_{(1721)} = -.374, p > .005$ ] in terms of "expected

**Table 2.** Independent group t test for the needs expectations for pcg services according to gender

Gender	N	M	SD	df	t	p
1 <sup>st</sup> Dimension: Expected PCG Services						
Female	2870	21.80	5.72	6620	7.182	.000*
Male	3752	20.75	6.03			
2 <sup>nd</sup> Dimension: Status of Pupil Personnel Services						
Female	2870	11.57	4.44	6620	-2.804	.005*
Male	3752	11.89	4.66			
3 <sup>rd</sup> Dimension: Need for Individual Counseling						
Female	2870	14.02	5.20	6620	-3.339	.001*
Male	3752	14.46	5.38			

\* p&lt;0.05

**Table 3.** Independent group t test for the needs expectations for pcg services according to class level

Class Level	N	M	SD	df	t	p
1 <sup>st</sup> Dimension: Expected PCG Services						
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	632	21,40	5,61	1721	-,374	0,708
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	1091	21,50	5,80			
2 <sup>nd</sup> Dimension: Status of Pupil Personnel Services						
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	632	12,60	4,30	1721	4,175	,000*
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	1091	11,70	4,32			
3 <sup>rd</sup> Dimension: Need for Individual Counseling						
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	632	14,07	5,11	1721	-0,244	0,807
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade	1091	14,13	5,18			

\* p&lt;0.05

PCG services”, there is a significant difference in favor of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade students [ $t_{(1721)} = 4,175$ ,  $p < .005$ ] in terms of “status of pupil personnel services”, there is no significant difference [ $t_{(1721)} = -0,244$ ,  $p > .005$ ] in terms of “need for individual counseling”.

4. Do the needs expectations of KOU students for PCG services vary “according to the status of receiving education in or off the campus”?

The results of the independent group t test for the determination of whether the needs expectations for PCG services vary according to the status of receiving education in or off the campus or not are shown in Table 4. In the light of the data in Table 4, it is observed that according to the status of receiving education in or off the

campus; there is a significant difference in favor of the ones receiving education in the campus [ $t_{(2545)} = 8.875$ ,  $p < .005$ ] in terms of “expected PCG services”, there is a significant difference in favor of the ones receiving education in the campus [ $t_{(2545)} = 2.065$ ,  $p < .005$ ] in terms of “status of pupil personnel services”, there is no significant difference [ $t_{(2545)} = 1.531$ ,  $p > .005$ ] in terms of “need for individual counseling”.

## DISCUSSION

As a result of the research, it has been determined that the students have positive perceptions about “expected PCG services”. These services include career counseling, seminars on personal development and psychological

**Table 4.** Independent group t test for the needs expectations for PCG services according to the status of receiving education in or off the campus

Campus	N	M	SD	df	t	p
1 <sup>st</sup> Dimension: Expected PCG Services						
Center	4230	21.70	5.70	2545	8.875	.000*
Other	2392	21.33	6.20			
2 <sup>nd</sup> Dimension: Status of Pupil Personnel Services						
Center	4230	11.84	4.20	2545	2.065	.039*
Other	2392	11.59	5.14			
3 <sup>rd</sup> Dimension: Need for Individual Counseling						
Center	4230	14.35	5.15	2545	1.531	.126
Other	2392	14.14	5.57			

\* p&lt;0.05

counseling and guidance services for personal and educational questions and problems. In terms of "status of pupil personnel services", it has been determined that the students find the implementations of the university carried out for pupil personnel services inadequate. The areas they are dissatisfied with are recreational facilities, socio-cultural facilities, the inadequacy of the psychological counseling services in the medico-social center, lack of university career center and the inadequacy of the services.

In the study carried out by Kulaksızoğlu (1989) at İstanbul university, it was also concluded that the university students had difficulty in finding a respondent for the solution of problems. In terms of "need for individual counseling", it has been concluded that the levels of the students' needs for individual counseling are low. It has been stated that the needs of students to understand their own feelings and behaviors and their needs for individual counseling to adapt to the social surroundings are also low. As it is understood at the interviews apart from the surveys, university students think that they have the capacity to be able to solve their own problems. In the study carried out by Taşkaya (2010), Kıransal et al. (2008) and Kutlu (2004), it was also stated that some students tried to solve their problems through different sources rather than through PCG centers and counselors.

With reference to the research findings, it can be concluded that females need more guidance than males in terms of "expected PCG services", on the other hand; males need more guidance than females in terms of "status of pupil personnel services" and "need for individual counseling". When the literature is examined, some differences are observed in the PCG services expectations of female and male students in a similar way to the result of this research. For example, according

to Gallagher (1992), the averages of the needs for psychological counseling and guidance stated by female students are always higher than males in almost all PCG fields. According to Tahnan and Eitah (2002) and Gallagher et al. (1992), female students need psychological counseling support in vocational, social, academic, moral and emotional respects. According to Guneri et al. (2003), while male students seek support about their family problems more, female students seek support about their personal problems and self-control more. According to Kacur and Atak (2011), male students have more academic member/instructor related problems, life problems, economic problems, health problems, job acquisition problems, problems related to bad habits, problems related to communication with environment, problems related to family and society, self-expression problems and problems related to psychological support compared to female students. According to Dost (2007), female students' life satisfaction levels are higher than male students'. According to Tuncer (2011), a significant difference is found in favor of female students among the future expectations of vocational high school students in terms of gender variable. On the other hand, Aluede, Imhonde and Eguavoe (2006) state that there is only one difference between male and female students' needs for counseling, which is seeking counseling for financial issues is more common among girls. The rest of the counseling needs do not seem to differ according to gender. Similarly, Kacur and Atak (2011) concluded that there was no significant difference between gender and study and exam related problems, administrative problems, educational problems, problems related to extracurricular activities, socio-cultural problems, problems related to making use of the leisure time, department related problems, family problems, psycho-social problems, psychological problems, interpersonal

communication problems, other problems and inner communication problems.

Although the expected PCG services show some differences according to gender, the intersection of these differences is not clarified in the stated researches. This situation reminds the emphasis of Erkan et al. (2011) and Gizir (2010) on the necessity of the determination of their own students' needs specifically by each university. In other words, although the PCG services expected by female and male students may vary, the necessity to reanalyze the needs of university students in order to plan the PCG services comes into question due to the social, economic and even technological changes.

With reference to the research findings, it can be concluded that the 1<sup>st</sup> grade students need more guidance than the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students in terms of "status of pupil personnel services", and guidance needs do not vary according to the status of being in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade in terms of "expected PCG services" and "need for individual counseling". In the study of Flisher et al. (2002), it is reported that the 1<sup>st</sup> grade students consult for psychological counseling more than the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students do and in the studies of Sher et al. (1996), it is observed that the 1<sup>st</sup> grade students state they are more suppressed than the other class levels and under more stress than ever before and the higher the class level is, the lower the perceived stress level. However, in the study carried out by Tuncer (2011) in which it was concluded that there was no significant difference among the averages of future expectations of vocational high school students according to the class variable, the result was in favor of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the students receiving education off the campus need more guidance in terms of "need for individual counseling", and guidance needs do not vary according to the status of receiving education in or off the campus in terms of "expected PCG services" and "status of pupil personnel services". In the study on the accommodation problems of students carried out by Güldiken and Özekicioğlu (2004), it is determined that the students living in flats do not have enough opportunities to study due to crowd and the students living in state dormitories have problems related to cleaning, not being able to watch television or study and check in and out times. In the study of Deniz et al. no significant difference is found between the places the students stay and their psychological symptoms.

According to the findings of this study, it can be stated that the students studying at KOU need guidance and psychological counseling services. Therefore, it is thought that a guidance and psychological counseling center to

be opened can provide a systematic assistance for personal development seminars, educational and vocational guidance studies in the scope of pupil personnel services. Moreover, it is believed that prevention based and personal awareness raising activities to be organized for students in such a center will help students grow up as individuals useful for the society and contributing to it in the students' transition period to adult life and they will make a significant contribution to the preparation of the programs for PCG services. It is also thought that the findings of this research conducted at a state university with a lot of students with different characteristics will be guiding in the regulations to be made in the field of PCG services at the other universities in our country.

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## Conflict of Interests

The author(s) have not declared any conflict of interests.

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*Full Length Research Paper*

# Making preservice teachers better: Examining the impact of a practicum in a teacher preparation program

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Overwhelmingly, preservice teachers indicate a benefit of having a practicum in their teacher preparation program. Yet, with a shortage of highly effective special education teachers, there is limited research about the effectiveness of practicum experiences on preservice special education teacher's preparation. The purpose of this study was to examine preservice special education teacher's perception of acquiring a practicum experience in their master's program and determine if there was a gain in clinical expertise. Preservice teachers were evaluated using the clinical evaluation continuum (CEC) at the beginning and end of their practicum; reflections were gathered regarding their perception of the added experience. Results show gains in clinical expertise, knowledge, and approval for the practicum. Limitations and implications are discussed.

**Key words:** Special education practicum; practicum; clinical experience; teacher preparation; special education.

## INTRODUCTION

According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) teachers learn to teach by teaching. Following this philosophy, teacher preparation programs embed field experiences, practicum, and student teaching within their programs. These experiences have been credited for being an important bridge between theory and practice (Giebelhaus and Bowman, 2002); allowing teacher candidates the opportunity to develop and apply knowledge and to experiment with best-practice strategies (Noonis and Jernice, 2011); using the theoretical underpinnings learned in academic courses to become authentic experiences

(Whitney et al., 2002); and to develop a more genuine perception of pedagogy (Maslak and McLaughlin, 2003). Tarman (2012) found that field experiences gave perspective teachers the opportunity to reflect on their understanding of teaching as a profession and modify their self-perceptions about teaching careers. These experiences have also been associated with helping teachers remain in the field, develop skills and competencies in classroom management, and progress in the teaching profession (Heppner, 1994; Smith and Lev-Ari, 2005). Posner (2009) stated that student teaching is

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often the first real opportunity for students to think as teachers and inquire actively rather than passively. As Goodlad (1999) stated “a person planning to teach should be experienced in the classroom prior to assuming independent responsibility for one” (p. 263).

Teacher candidates also report the benefits of the practicum experience; preservice and in-service teachers expressed the benefits of field experiences in aiding professional growth and the valuable teacher training experience (Guyton and McIntyre, 1990). In one such study conducted in Singapore by Noonis and Jernice (2011) teacher candidates reported that their practicum experience provided them with the hands-on experience needed to develop an understanding of students’ needs within the classroom and other school related matters. Of those interviewed 91% reported that practicum experience helped them develop an improved comprehension of pupils’ social needs. Those who participated in the special education practicum experience reported that an essential link between the conceptual framework of theoretical underpinnings and ‘real world’ classroom practice was created through authentic situations and hands on experiences (91%, 88%, & 91% respectively).

Also noteworthy was their ability to try out new and different teaching strategies and to reflect on their lesson delivery. Similar findings were quantified by Bishop et al. (2010) who found that the most valuable experience was the opportunity for “applied practice” with six out of seven participants explicitly mentioning this specific to their practicum program (p. 85). Another study that examined data dating back to 1998 regarding teachers self-perception of their preparation for teaching consistently indicated that general educator graduates from traditional programs that provided extensive preparation and practicum experience reported being significantly better prepared to teach subject matter, develop curriculum, and handle classroom management than those graduates from non-traditional teacher education programs with alternative or no preparation of ‘real world’ application (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002).

Although the practicum experiences of general educators have been studied more extensively than with special educators, improvements with both groups of educators have been noted. In one such study, Leko and Brownell (2011) examined a reading methods course with a practicum component to determine the impact of the field experience on student learning. The study found that when preservice teachers had opportunities to apply instruction in a classroom environment, their quality of reading instruction improved. Conversely, without the benefit of ‘real world’ application, teacher candidates struggled to apply the concepts learned in coursework. Method courses in reading and math that were combined with field experiences, integrated theoretical content

delivery methodology with hands-on application, creating instructional delivery that improved academic achievement of students with disabilities (Leko, 2008). The finding from two separate studies demonstrated that coursework that included structured field experience provided preservice teachers opportunities to improve reading-based content knowledge, which improved their ability to promote student reading achievement (Spear-Swerling, 2009; Spear-Swerling and Brucker, 2004).

Similar conclusions were discovered by McDonnough and Matkins (2010) who examined the documented reflections of preservice elementary teachers’ field experiences. The study revealed that preservice teachers had a better image of their duties as a science teacher through having this early practicum, elucidating the positive influence of practicum on teacher self-efficacy. Despite the efforts of teacher preparation programs to embed field experiences as a requirement for a teaching certificate, this practice has been criticized for not sufficiently preparing preservice teachers to cope with full time teaching. In one of such study, the teacher candidate reported that the practicum “did not adequately prepare them for the complexities and demands of full-time teaching, despite their consistently held beliefs that [it] was a key part of their preparation for teaching” (Grudnoff, 2011, p. 233). Feiman-Nemser (2001) stated that there is a disconnection between teacher preparation and professional practice, where preservice and in-service training is offered in “discrete and disconnected events” (p. 1049).

Without a cohesive preparation program to connect course content and practicum experiences, candidates fail to see the ‘full picture’ of the teaching profession. However, Grudnoff (2011) who qualitatively examined 12 first year primary teachers’ perceptions of how their practicum experiences prepared them to start teaching offers an alternative perspective. While most reported a mismatch at the beginning of their first year of teaching that resulted in a disruptive effect on their transition into teaching, this did not last throughout the year. These teachers had completed student teaching during the spring and therefore did not understand what teaching was like at the beginning of the year. Now, as new teachers, they were responsible for setting up everything in their rooms, establishing routines, developing behavior management strategies, and introducing curriculum.

Additionally, these teachers stated that while in practicum, they mainly focused on lesson planning and reflecting on lessons taught, but as a teacher they realized how much more they had to do. Although faulty, teacher preparation programs do have their merits in relation to teacher preparedness and retention (Boe et al., 2008; Feng (2009); Nougaret et al., 2005; Sindelar, et al, 2004). Using a large dataset, Feng (2009) determined



that greater academic achievement gains were made by students whose teachers completed preservice preparation programs; providing preliminary data demonstrating a link between student achievement and traditional teacher programs. Analogous conclusions were made by Bishop et al. (2010) in their exploration of personal attributes, preparation, and school environment among beginning special education teachers who vary in their classroom reading practice. Three of the least accomplished teachers had no previous experience teaching reading or students with a disability due to an unrelated internship from their current placement or no internship at all.

A review of school staff surveys and beginning teacher self-reports conducted by Boe et al. (2007) found that a combination of pedagogical foundations instruction and practicum experience helped to better prepare and secure beginning teachers in their professional teaching assignments than their professional peers who had minimal to no field experience. In a similar study conducted with two groups of teachers, 20 who earned a traditional license and 20 who held an emergency provisional license, Nougaret et al. (2005) found that the traditionally licensed teachers were rated statistically higher by an experienced supervisor across three ratings: planning and preparation, classroom environment, and instruction. However, according to their self-assessments, all of the teachers rated themselves similarly in teaching proficiency, which may possibly indicate a lack of self-awareness in weaker professional areas. Previous studies involving self-evaluations reveal that regardless of licensure track (traditional or nontraditional), teachers rate themselves equally in professional competency (Balfour, 2001; Houston, Marshall and McDavid, 1993; Martin, and Shoho, 1999; Nougaret, Scruggs and Mastropieri, 2005).

Sindelar and colleagues (2004) examined the practices of beginning special education teachers who participated in three preparation routes, finding that teachers graduates from campus-based, alternative programs, and a district-university collaborative program felt better prepared and more competent than district-only alternative program graduates. The authors concluded that novice special educators, who completed traditional preparation programs, outperformed those who completed alternative programs. In support of these findings, through qualitative interviews and observation, Leko (2008) found strong positive influencing factors for instruction quality flourished as special education teacher candidates had multiple opportunities to apply their theoretical knowledge of reading content and instructional delivery to students with disabilities, showing that variations in preparation experiences and individual qualities of beginning special education teachers blend to inform

teachers' practices.

In addition to evaluations that determine levels of professional mastery, data has also been gathered regarding the attitudes and beliefs of teaching proficiency by the candidates. Conderman et al. (2005) concluded through response analyses that preservice teachers liked having a year-long internship program because it made them feel confident and prepared for their own classrooms. They also expressed the benefits of the hands-on experience under guidance. Leko and colleague (2011) found that field experiences, which were designed to implement strategies acquired during coursework, had the most promise for increasing preservice teachers' sense of efficacy, perceptions of competence, and lesson planning abilities. For example, teachers candidates who implemented evidence-based strategies when creating lesson plans and delivering instruction during a four-hour practicum that lasted for eight weeks, "made a noticeable impact in over 60% of sampled lessons" with high levels of accuracy and fidelity (Maheady, Jabot, Rey, and Michielli-Pendl, 2007, p. 24).

In another study with similar findings, Gettinger et al. (2008) used a workshop approach that included weekly three-hour training sessions, field experiences, and coaching sessions for instruction on how to conduct and implement functional behavior assessments and positive behavioral supports. Those who participated using the collaborative consultation model of behavior intervention showed the significant professional gains for themselves and the targeted student population, surpassing the results from the control group participants.

The current literature base on teacher candidate preparation is "scattered in focus and uneven in quality, thus making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about how high-quality special education teacher training should be conceptualized and implemented" (Leko, 2008 p.126). Conderman et al. (2005) consider practicum experiences the most meaningful component of a teacher preparation program; however, there is little empirical evidence to support its paramount significance in the special education field. In their extensive literature review regarding teacher preparation programs and professional skillset et al. (2005) concluded that it is difficult to deduct from the research what impact a specific field experience may have on the preservice teacher. To ensure that preservice teachers have opportunities to apply their knowledge, access to high-quality field experiences is essential; research aimed at developing effective strategies for improving the quality of field experiences is imperative (Leko, 2008).

In this age of educational accountability where no child left behind (NCLB) requires that all teachers should be highly qualified and with the new rigors of the common core state standards, it is critical that we understand the

**Table 1.** CEC standards

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Example of Essential Clinical Skill</b>
Standard 1: Creating and maintaining a positive and safe learning environment	Establishes, monitors, and enforces expectations for student behavior.
Standard 2: Planning for instruction	Demonstrates knowledge of subject matter content and student development.
Standard 3: Engaging and supporting students in learning	Uses a variety of research-based educational practices that are responsive to students' diverse needs and experiences.
Standard 4: Assessing student learning	Creates and explains criteria for assessing student work.
Standard 5: Developing as a professional	Exhibits a commitment to professional standards associated with their areas of expertise.

Adapted from the Santa Cruz new teacher project continuum of the new teacher center, 2005

results of our efforts in preparing teacher candidates during their initial licensure programs (Carlson et al., 2004). Therefore, this study will explore the impact of embedding a practicum experience for preservice special education teachers in their master's program. More specifically, the aim is to determine if there was a gain in clinical expertise for preservice special education teachers' enrolled in the practicum, and to examine their perception of this experience in their master's program.

## METHODOLOGY

This descriptive survey study collected data to determine the impact of adding a practicum for preservice special education teachers, and to examine their perception on adding a practicum experience in their master's program. Descriptive survey studies are used to describe a one-time interaction with groups of people at one point in time, and are often described as the best method for collecting research data prior to performing an experimental study (Jackson, 2009). This study took place at a large university in the southeast region of the United States, in a master's level methods course for candidates studying to be special educators. The course was transformed from a 16-week face-to-face traditional instruction, to an eight-week, face-to-face instruction and an eight-week practicum experience. The study evaluated special education preservice teachers who were enrolled in a sixteen-week special education teacher methodology course that required eight-weeks of face-to-face instruction and a newly added 8 week practicum. The total participants in this study included: (N=10; all were between the ages of 24 and 45; 10% were African American, 80% were Caucasian, 10% were Hispanic; 90% were female and 10% were male).

## Instrumentation

For the purpose of this study, the clinical evaluation continuum (CEC) (Adapted from the Santa Cruz new teacher project continuum of the new teacher center, 2005) which included five standards, each with a series of essential clinical skills for special education teachers, was used to assess the teacher candidates' gain in

clinical expertise. The original Santa Cruz continuum contained six standards that focused on advancing the professional practice of beginning teachers. The CEC was adapted to focus beginning teacher practice and growth over time on the following five clinical expertise standards: (Standard 1) creating and maintaining a positive and safe learning environment (7 essential skills); (Standard 2) planning for instruction (7 essential skills); (Standard 3) engaging and supporting students in learning (7 essential skills); (Standard 4) assessing student learning (6 essential skills); and (Standard 5) developing as a professional (19 essential skills). Table 1 shows the five core standards and examples of essential clinical skills that guide activities for the practicum. The preservice teacher was assessed across each standard from unacceptable to target; each level presuming that the teacher has reached the previous level. During the practicum portion of the course, candidates were not expected to achieve target levels; rather, demonstration of progress across the standards was expected.

The CEC scoring rubric evaluates preservice teachers on a scale of 0 (unacceptable) to six (target). Scores of 1 to 2 may be given for candidates at the beginning level, 3 to 4 for those at the acceptable level, and 5 to 6 for those at the target level. For each level, except unacceptable (where the rating is 0), there is a high end (2, 4, 6) and a low end (1, 3, 5). A rating of "no opportunity to observe" is permissible for skills that instructors and cooperating teachers are not able to observe during the evaluation period. Each of the five standards also contains a narrative section. To understand the preservice teachers' perceptions of the practicum to the master's program, they were asked to reflect on three open-ended questions: "What were the impacts of embedding the practicum into this master's program?"; "What would you like to see more or less of during this practicum experience?"; and "What are further recommendations for improving the practicum?"

Cooperating teachers and preservice teachers were all trained to use the CEC on the first day of the eight-week face-to-face section of the course. During the training, the instructor, who is also one of the authors, engaged in a group discussion, deliberating on potential problems that may occur during practicum placements. For example, cooperating teachers are encouraged to provide preservice teachers the opportunity to perform each standard and essential skill in the CEC rubric; however, the design of the instrument allows for a rating of "no opportunity to observe," indicating that preservice teachers may be unable to perform standards and skills. The cooperating Teachers and preservice teachers were encouraged to bring potential issues that occur during the practicum placement to the Instructor for any clarification.

**Table 2.** Practicum candidate's pretest-posttest rating (N=10)

CEC Standard	Pretest		Posttest	
	(M)	(SD)	(M)	(SD)
Standard 1: Creating and maintaining a positive and safe learning environment	2.20	(.92)	3.30	(.48)
Standard 2: Planning for instruction	1.70	(.48)	3.30	(.48)
Standard 3: Engaging and supporting students in learning	1.90	(.32)	3.20	(.42)
Standard 4: Assessing student learning	1.90	(.57)	2.70	(.67)
Standard 5: Developing as a professional	2.00	(.47)	3.20	(1.03)

### Procedures

The methods course began the week of 21 January, 2013 and ended 3 May, 2013, with the first eight-weeks providing intensive face-to-face instruction on teaching strategies and the implementation of assignments targeting elementary and secondary students with a high incidence disability. The course assignments addressed assessing and monitoring student performance; adapting instructional interventions based on students' response to intervention; and selecting evidence-based, best-teaching practices that have the greatest likelihood of success. Following the eight-week face-to-face instruction, candidates advanced to the practicum experience. During the eight-week practicum, preservice teachers would receive mentoring from the instructor and cooperating teacher. Candidates were paired with the cooperating teacher for the eight-week practicum, where they worked side-by-side, based on common interests including the elementary or secondary setting. Cooperating teacher's role was to provide the preservice teachers with immediate feedback, supervision, and mentoring support during the practicum.

### Major assignment

During the eight-week face-to-face instruction period, the preservice teachers developed a unit plan, guided by the course instructor that consisted of 10 evidence-based lesson plans and assessment material that support students with a high incident disability during classroom instruction. The lesson plans included assessment material to inform student achievement and reflection on instruction. Throughout the practicum, the preservice teachers implemented their unit plan under the supervision of the course instructor and cooperating teacher, who both provided formative and summative feedback.

### Administration of the survey instrument/data analysis

During the eight-week face-to-face section of the course, preservice teachers completed a self-evaluation using the clinical evaluation continuum (CEC) survey, which took approximately 30 minutes to complete. The self-evaluation was then repeated after completing the 8-week practicum. The course instructor also rated each candidate using the CEC at the end of their experience based on two practicum observations. Additionally, after 40-hours of support, guidance and mentoring, the cooperating teacher provided a CEC rating. Statistical analyses were performed on the pre/posttest survey and then compared. Descriptive statistics (that is, mean, standard deviation) were reported in Table 2 seen below. The quantitative results were calculated and reported alongside the

respondents' qualitative narrative. The comments on the three open-ended questions were examined using recognized qualitative analysis techniques whereby data were broken down for distinct trends and patterns and reorganized into theme (Creswell, 2003). While the quantitative data produced some useful feedback about the impact of the practicum, the qualitative data also generated some useful information.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The overall findings from the study indicate that the preservice teachers made gains to their CEC clinical skills during the practicum experience. Preservice teachers showed significant gains with each standard. The highest-rated scores were: "creating and maintaining a positive and safe learning environment" and "planning for instruction" in which the average score was 3.30 (.48). Table 2 displays the means of the pre-posttest of students clinical skills related to each of the CEC standards. Table 3 depicts the means scores provided by both the instructor and cooperating teacher who rated preservice teachers on the CEC scale. Overall, the instructor and cooperating teachers' scores indicated that the preservice teachers made gains. The instructor rated "planning for instruction" with an average score of 3.60 (.52), "developing as a professional" with an average score of 3.30 (1.06), as the highest skills; while "engaging and supporting students in learning" with an average score of 3.20, and the other standards were aligned with student ratings. For the cooperating teacher, "developing as a professional" with an average score of 3.60 (1.07), and "planning for instruction" with an average score of 3.40 (.52) were highly rated; as well the other standards were aligned with the ratings of the preservice teachers. Despite showing gains, practicum teachers 2.70 (.67), instructor 2.60 (.52), and cooperating teacher 2.70 (.48) rated "assessing student learning" below that of the other standards.

## DISCUSSION

As previously indicated, the significance of teacher

**Table 3.** Post clinical practicum rating (N=10)

CEC Standard	Instructor		Cooperating Teacher	
	(M)	(SD)	(M)	(SD)
Standard 1: Creating and maintaining a positive and safe learning environment	3.10	(.32)	3.20	(.42)
Standard 2: Planning for instruction	3.60	(.52)	3.40	(.52)
Standard 3: Engaging and supporting students in learning	3.20	(.42)	3.10	(.32)
Standard 4: Assessing student learning	2.60	(.52)	2.70	(.48)
Standard 5: Developing as a professional	3.30	(1.06)	3.60	(1.07)

preparation programs embedding field experiences—particularly practicums—are essential to developing professional teaching skills and competencies (Heppner, 1994; Macy et al., 2009; Noonis and Jernice, 2011; Smith and Lev-Ari, 2005). The struggle to link theory and classroom practice without the benefit of a practicum experience has also been documented (Leko and Brownell, 2011). To that point, practicum experiences offer preservice teachers the ability to develop and actively engage in critical skills, which may positively impact their teaching quality and performance with students in the classroom.

While the relationship between practicum and training in an authentic setting, to develop and apply new or different strategies that improve preservice teachers retention is acknowledge within the general environment (Cameron et al., 2007; Smith and Lev-Ari, 2005), there is limited research on this practice specifically in the special education field (Conderman et al., 2005). The current study sought to determine whether a practicum experience for preservice special education teachers would be effective and to examine the preservice teachers' perception on this addition to their program. This study was conducted with 10 preservice teachers enrolled in a master of special education program aimed at teaching students with a high incidence disability. The participants were asked to evaluate (pretest) their knowledge and skills on 5 standards (46 essential skills), and again (posttest) at the conclusion of the practicum.

Overall, the findings revealed that candidates made gains across the clinical standards. The most significant gains were made in “creating and maintaining a positive and safe learning environment,” and “planning for instruction.” This is not unexpected, as issues related to the safety were comprehensively reviewed in the eight-week of intensive in-class classroom time to prepare students for the practicum. Additionally, preservice teachers spent a considerable portion of their practicum experience working with the instructor and cooperating teacher in planning for the unit activity. Although the clinical standards, “engaging and supporting students in learning,” “assessing student learning,” and “developing

as a professional” made gains, it is suggested that consideration be made on increasing the potential for candidates to have more instruction and opportunities for practice with these standards as the gains were not as significant.

Despite the gains marked by the pretest and posttest results for many of the CEC standards, ratings for Standard 4, “assessing student learning” that included self-assessment posttest ratings, 2.70 (.67), instructor 2.60 (.52), and cooperating teacher 2.70 (.48), suggest that preservice teachers remained at the beginning level according to the scale. Freiberg (2002) discussed the struggles faced by new teachers with student assessment and self-assessment; organization time management and lesson planning; and differentiated instructional practices. In order to improve teacher preparedness for beginning educators, he recommends more focus on instruction on multiple methods of assessing student progress. In their research pertaining to novice teachers' attention to student-centered instruction, Levin et al. (2009) explained that “teacher preparation, however, remains largely teacher centered,” and that “method courses focus on the things teachers do, from instructional methods to management strategies and programs emphasize self-reflecting and identify information” (p.144). The researchers argued that there must be more attention placed on novice teacher assessment preparation. Therefore, as it relates to this present study, we also suggest that teacher preparation programs pay close attention to preservice training relating to assessing student learning formatively and summatively. Because we did not ask preservice teachers their perception on their preparation for each standard; we do not know with confidence their struggle with assessing student learning.

### Candidates' perception of the practicum

As a mean to gain more insight into their perception of adding the practicum, candidates were asked to reflect on three questions following the completion of the survey, as stated in the instrumentation section. At large,

preservice teachers' appreciated the opportunity to have a practicum experience that provided access to authentic classroom experience with students. There were three themes which emerged from the response. Preservice teachers' responses indicated a desire for more practicum experiences to be embedded into the master's program. For example, one response suggested that working hands-on with cooperating teachers and students should be a requirement for each major assignment in their program.

This finding is validated by research indicating preservice teachers' perception of the benefit and value of practicums (Guyton and McIntyre, 1990; Noonis and Jernice, 2011). In one of such study, authors Noonis and Jernice (2011) recommended continuous practicum experiences to help reduce stress related to transitioning into the teaching profession and to better understand students' social and academic needs. It is suggested for this study and for other special education teacher preparation programs that practicums be built and sustained across the program.

Preservice teachers also identified that having cooperating teachers correct instructional challenges and available for assignment and classroom management feedback was crucial to their success. For example, one preservice teacher indicated that the cooperating teacher helped her to understand school culture and other teaching experiences that can only be gained from field experience. Additionally, the supervising or mentor teacher's compatibility is critically important to the success of the preservice teacher. Boz and Boz (2006) indicated the importance of the student teacher and cooperating teacher relationship; indicating that student teacher's outcomes were affected by the relationship they held with their cooperating teacher regarding the teaching experience. Other studies support the positive practicum learning experience influenced by a compatible relationship between preservice teachers and their mentors and supervisors (Boz and Boz, 2006; Caires and Almeida, 2007; Conderman et al, 2005). Therefore, another area for future study may consider the pairing of the instructor, mentor teacher, and student or practicum teacher to create the most suitable relationships. Few teacher preparation programs assess the quality of the university supervisor's supervision (Conderman et al., 2001).

For final emergent pattern, preservice teachers' noted a frustration in having to purchase their own resources and supplies, and having to reconsider technology-based instructional ideas due to limited university and school funding options. One study on new teacher retention revealed that novice teachers leave the field after using rations of their salary to purchase materials due to their school's limited funding scheduled for teaching supplies (McCoy, 2003). The researcher discussed the difficulties

for teachers to perform the latest teaching strategies, to include technology related advances; all due to limited resources. A point that needs to be emphasized is that experiences and evidence-based practices embedded in teacher preparation programs through practicum experiences may have limited worth when it cannot be translated into authentic classroom practice in the classroom. Therefore, teacher preparation programs must understand the needs of partnering community schools and pool resources to develop effective practicum experiences that will translate to real-world experiences for preservice teachers.

## LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

With the practicum's success, we are dedicated to supporting its adoption into the master's program. Expansion of the practicum into multiple courses across the program will be reviewed once improvements are sought based on this study's findings. However, interpretations of these data should be viewed with restraint due to the following limitations. First, this study was restricted to a limited number of participants ( $n=10$ ). Therefore, it is recommended that future research be conducted on a larger scale. Perhaps an investigation on the clinical expertise of special education novice teachers not enrolled in a practicum course would provide further confidence on the effectiveness of the practicum. Further research is also needed to understand the relationships between teacher preparation and quality (Instruction? Programming? Practicum experience?). We know very little about how field experiences are evaluated. We also know little about how the characteristics of the school placement, supervisor, and how the classroom environment affect the experiences. Addressing these limitations may offer one step towards improving novice teacher quality and the overall impact of practicum programs.

## Conflict of Interests

The author(s) have not declared any conflict of interests.

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*Full Length Research Paper*

# Teacher perspectives on civic and human rights education

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**This study aims to obtain teacher perspectives on the civic and human rights education course included in the eighth grade curriculum in Turkish schools. The study group was selected with criterion sampling from among teachers who were teaching the eighth grade civic and human rights education at elementary schools in central Hatay. Using the qualitative research design, this study gathered its data through semistructured interviews and analyzed it descriptively. Data reliability was .89. The results showed that the objectives of the civic and human rights education course were well-understood by the teachers and that it was perceived as an important course. It was also found that these objectives could not be achieved, course content was not adequate, and the course was mostly conducted through traditional methods such as question and answer. The majority of participants identified "not seeing children as adolescents" as the most serious problem of the civic and human rights education course and recommended "establishing a democratic environment at schools" as a solution.**

**Key words:** Democracy, democracy education, citizenship, effective citizen, human rights.

## INTRODUCTION

Democracy, citizenship and human rights are interrelated and ever-present concepts that make human life easier and better. Relationships between societies and cultural interactions are increasing everyday in the information age that we live in, making these concepts more and more important. There is a meaningful and undisputed relationship between democracy, citizenship and human rights. An awareness of human rights and citizenship can only be fostered in democratic environments.

Based on public sovereignty and self governance, democracy is a type of political system and administration. However, it would be misleading to view democracy merely as a type of administration. It needs to be

considered in relation to the socioeconomic and cultural dimensions that reflect a certain way of life and political philosophy (Ertürk, 1981: 3). Democracy is not only a form of government but a way of life. Regardless of its various definitions, democracy is a freedom regime that promises human rights. That is why democracy today is often defined with its personal dimensions rather than social (Touraine 1991:266). Democracy education firstly requires self-awareness and then an awareness of others. As individuals in democratic systems learn about their personal rights and freedoms, they also realize the extent to which the opinions of "the other" are valued in the historical, economic, cultural and moral structure of

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their society and understand the problems that arise due to this (Çalık, 2002: 46).

The way to a democratic personality and possession of democratic values is undoubtedly a well structured and organized educational process. Education is therefore one of the most important factors in the development and strengthening of democracy. An education system can fulfill its function of establishing a democratic society by fostering individuals with democratic values and making democracy the dominant culture. Democratic life habits can only be fostered within a democratic education system (Gürşimşek and Göregenli, 2004: 78). A democratic society requires democratic individuals and these individuals can only flourish in a society with democratic values (Gözütok, 1998: 56). In truly democratic countries, the state is responsible for introducing and teaching human rights and basic freedoms to citizens because those who do not know the scope and dimensions of these cannot exercise their rights.

The right to know human rights can only be insured through democracy education (Gözütok, 1998: 57). One of the basic aims of democracy education is to foster respect for individual differences. At the heart of the thought that human rights and freedoms must be valued lies a democratic and humanistic worldview. The idea for a democratic society was born out of individual human differences and needs. Democracy accepts that individuals are autonomous, responsible for self-governance, and able to choices and decisions for themselves. This approach considers each individual as valuable and unique, and endorses personal development (Yeşilyaprak, 2000: 13). Then, the main goal of democracy education should be to foster individuals with a humanistic attitude and respect for other humans. The democratic lifestyle in modern societies requires individuals in line with this lifestyle because democracy can only be realized through individuals that understand and adopt it (Demirtaş, 2008: 3). Democracy education in Turkey started with the establishment of the republic. In this era, a secular, innovative, and national understanding of education was adopted, and this was made official on 3 March, 1924 with the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* law. The emphasis here was on educating freethinking, productive, questioning, scientific and democratic citizens required by the new democratic regime (Atasoy, 1997).

Individuals who are aware of their civic rights and responsibilities help the development of a democratic attitude within the society. Karip (2006:321) states that civic education is based on the teaching of basic knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are synonymous with being a citizen of a given country and are part of its compulsory education. Civic education is a process through which individuals are taught their position in the society and its basic values. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) state that a democratic society has three types of citizens: Socially responsible (knows and fulfills social responsibilities), participating (becomes involved in social

life activities on a national and regional level) and justice-oriented (makes meaning of and analyzes the interaction between social, economic and political power). All democratic societies strive for citizens that harbor all three of these characteristics.

Humans must think and know in order to live, but merely knowing is not enough because they must also understand the purposes of knowing and also experience welfare, happiness and freedom (Değirmencioğlu, 1997: 26). Therefore, modern countries value the teaching of democratic behaviors in their schools. As social beings, humans are educated to comply with social rules, values and norms, but at the same time to make necessary adjustments in these when this is necessary for social change. Education is the medium through which individuals learn how the state – citizen relationship needs to occur. Democracy and civic knowledge also brings knowing and defending human rights. In European countries there are several educational programs, initiatives and projects that offer students practical civic experiences during school. Successful civic education requires a participatory school culture based on democratic principles and offering students opportunities to become involved in the decisions that affect them. School culture refers to the system of attitudes, values, norms, beliefs, daily practices, principles, rules, and institutional regulations developed within the school. National curriculum and/or educational regulations support the adoption of democratic attitudes and values by the entire school (Eurydice, 2013).

Civic understanding is closely related to public sovereignty. So is democracy to citizenship (Akbaşlı, 2009: 48). The citizen that democracy calls for is one that is aware of his rights, respects those of others, believes in civic duties, fulfills social and moral responsibilities, and is in solidarity with others. In addition, he can think critically, respects others, displays tolerance, and believes in such values, attitudes and behaviors as national identity and belonging. It is a major goal of education to raise students as democratic and effective citizens. In this respect, schools are a universe for students where they learn how to become active and responsible citizens through their daily experiences (Eurydice, 2005).

Human rights are not an abstract, theoretical or philosophical concept; they are the birthright of all humans regardless of gender, age or other differences (Kepenekçi, 2000:113). They refer to untouchable and indispensable rights that all humans are entitled to regardless of religious, linguistic, racial, social, cultural and economic differences (Donnelley, 1995; Kocaoğlu, 1997; Duman et al., 2010). Among these are the right to education, health, personal untouchability, living in a healthy environment, petition writing, privacy of personal life, accommodation and the vote. It is only possible to exercise these rights if human rights education is a part of social and political education (Cunningham, 1991: 102). Human rights are based on the rights freedoms, duties



and responsibilities brought by the concept of citizenship. It is perhaps the most important goal of education to foster individuals who know and use these rights and responsibilities effectively. It is the belief of many educators that democracy, citizenship and human rights concepts are multidimensional and interdisciplinary, and therefore they should be taught in relation to multiple courses (Magendzo, 1994; Tibbitts, 2002; Paykoç, 2005: 56; Eurydice, 2005).

Civic education was launched in Turkey with the ministry of education's board of education decree dated 01.08.1995 and numbered 289 to include a course entitled civic and human rights education to 8th grade curriculum as of the 1995 to 1996 school year (MEB 1995: 188). Starting from the 1997 to 1998 school year, the course was included in both 7th and 8th grade curricula as a one-hour class every week. The aims of the civic and human rights curriculum include:

1. To contribute to a democratic and fair society as independent, free, tolerant, peace-promoting and self confident individuals.
2. To internalize the importance of preserving and enhancing common values
3. To fulfill civic responsibilities as citizens of Turkish Republic.

The civic and human rights curriculum has four themes: humans as precious beings, a culture of democracy, rights and freedoms, duties and responsibilities. Teaching activities are designed around these four themes to meet the aims of the curriculum. There are plans to rename the course human rights, citizenship and democracy and to move it from the 8th to the 4th grade curriculum as a compulsory two-hour weekly course as of the 2014 to 2015 school year.

The basic mission of social studies education is to endow students with the knowledge, skills and values that will turn them into effective citizens (NCSS, 2012). This course must teach students that they are citizens of the world. In this way, they can learn to see the world through multiple perspectives and compare different points of view (Merryfield and Subedi, 2001). Even though the overall goal of education is to foster good citizens, within most school curricula this huge task falls only onto the shoulders of the social studies course (Doğanay, 2002: 17). Osler and Starkey (2005: 9-24) state that citizenship does not stop at the borders of a country. Gradually globalizing, the world requires education of global citizens who has free and equal rights. That is why it is important for the social studies course to teach the importance of national and universal values for effective citizens.

Elementary education aims to equip children with certain knowledge, skills and attitudes so that they can become effective humans and citizens (Yeşil, 2002).

Civic and human rights are among the most popular

topics in the country and around the globe. Naturally it is beyond the scope of this study to evaluate whether civic and human rights are internalized in the country. However, democracy, human rights and civic understanding are processes that can be fostered through education. Today, civic education in most countries takes place in the social studies course, and aims to raise sensitive individuals with national and universal values, rather than people who only lie for their own nation (Kan, 2009: 25-30). In other words, civic and human rights education today encompasses world citizenship. Individuals are no longer only expected to be good citizens in their own countries, but effective world citizens as well. They need to be sensitized to global events such as famine, economic recession, earthquakes, wars and terrorism, and be able to view these events independently and critically, thus requiring a global civic education approach.

This shows the importance of the civic and human rights education course, and the need to know the perspectives of teachers on this course. Naturally, teachers' knowledge, views and philosophies will affect their perspectives on the course as well as their classroom implementations. Teachers' understanding the meaning of a democratic society is the first step towards teaching democratic values and behaviors (Ravitch, 1991). Then, democratic education is only possible with teachers who believe in democracy as a lifestyle, thus the importance of their views on the civic and human rights course.

## Literature review

The studies in the literature can mostly be grouped into three. The first group covers studies evaluating the dimensions of the civic and human rights education course curriculum (objectives, behaviors and methods) and investigating course books in the area (Gözütok, 1998; Kenez, 1993; Toraman, 2012; Yiğittir, 2003; Uyangör, 2007; Elkatmış, 2012; Türker, 1999; Üstündağ, 1995; Yeşil, 2004).

The second one covers studies on the effectiveness of civic and human rights education, teacher and school principals' views about democracy and democracy education, teacher needs regarding civic education, the mission of the course civic and human rights, and the problems faced in its implementation (Karaman and Kepenekçi, 2005; Yağan, 2010; Ersoy, 2007; Torun, 2009). The third group includes teacher studies on democracy education and school parliaments (Doğan, 2008; Uyanık, 2009; Özdemir, 2009; Genç and Güner, 2012).

The aim of the present study is to obtain teacher views about the 8th grade course civic and human rights education, which has a role in the fostering of "effective human beings" and "effective citizens".

The study conducted by Başaran (2007) at Trakya university about "the views of social studies teachers on the implementation of the elementary civic and human

rights education curriculum” is similar to this study with its content and qualitative nature. However, the purpose of Başaran's study was to “evaluate the elementary civic and human rights education curriculum based on teacher views and offer practical recommendations”. Başaran's study is therefore one on curriculum evaluation. Different from others in the literature, the present study aims to obtain teacher views on the civic and human rights education course and identify how it is perceived by teachers. In order to enable teachers to freely express their opinions without limitations, the study used the qualitative research design.

## Purpose

The purpose of the study is to obtain teacher views on the 8th grade civic and human rights education course. Within the scope of this overall purpose, the following research questions were formed:

- 1- How do teachers of the Civic and Human Rights course conceptualize civic and human rights?
- 2-To what extent do teachers think that the objectives of the Civic and Human Rights Education course are met?
- 3- What are the teachers' views on the contents of the Civic and Human Rights Education course?
- 4-What do teachers think about the implementation of the Civic and Human Rights Education course?
- 5- What are the problems and proposed solutions for the Civic and Human Rights Education course that the teachers could identify?

## METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study collected its data through semi-structured interviews. Brannigan (1985: 196 to 205) writes that this type of interview aims to find the parallelisms and differences between the data obtained from the interviewees and make comparisons. Semi-structured items were used so interviewees could express themselves comfortably. The items were formed in five themes reflecting the main purpose of the study in order to reveal how teachers viewed the meaning of the course, whether objectives were being met, what they thought about the course content, how they taught the course, what problems they faced as they taught it, and what recommendations they had to tackle them. The items were finalized after obtaining the views of two experts in the field.

The participants were formed by using the purposive method of “criterion sampling”. The basic approach here is to study all conditions meeting a set of prespecified criteria. These criteria may be created by the researcher or a list of existing criteria may be used (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011: 112). As a result, the sample included the teachers teaching the 8th grade civic and human rights education course at elementary schools in the center of Hatay province of Turkey. However, 12 of these 43 teachers did not want to participate and the study was conducted with 31 teachers who volunteered to take place. Of these teachers, 25 had been educated as social studies teachers, four as history teachers, and two as geography teachers. They were 21 males and 9 females. While five teachers had 25 and more years of work experience, 17 had between 15 to 24 years, five between 10 to 14 years, and four

between 5 to 13 years. In sum, the majority (81%) were social studies teachers, more than half (67%) were female, and (55%) had over 15 years of work experience.

All 31 participants were contacted separately to inform them about the study. The date and place of interviews were decided according to their wishes. The interviews were made in an informal setting. Responses were recorded with the consent of the teachers without mentioning their names. During the interview, follow up questions were asked as needed in order to get in-depth data. After collecting data, the recordings were transcribed and written into indices. After data classification, a thematic framework was drawn for descriptive analysis. In order to ensure reliability of data analysis, another field expert as a second coder was also given the data along with the coding key and asked to code the responses. Agreement between the coders was calculated by using the Miles and Huberman formula (1994)  $\text{agreement} / \text{disagreement} + \text{agreement} \times 100$ . The resulting reliability level was 89%. As it surpassed 80%, the study was concluded as reliable. When the results were presented, certain teacher views were quoted using code such as Teacher 1 (T1), Teacher 2 (T2).

## RESULTS

The data were gathered under five themes in line with the aim of the study. The results are presented in tables and explained in accordance with the research questions. Interpretation of the results are made in discussion section.

### Findings about the conceptualization of the civic and human rights education

The participants were asked what the course civic and human rights education meant for them, and the responses are given in Table 1 in subthemes.

Table 1 shows that all 31 teachers viewed the civic and human rights education course as one that “teaches the requirements of a democratic life and informs about human rights (demanding rights, respect for difference of opinion and belief, freedom of thought and expression, the right to vote, etc.). In addition, 29 of the 31 teachers also perceived the course as one that teaches civic rights and responsibilities (establishing civic awareness, health, following legal rules, constitution, paying taxes, education, etc.). Further, 26 participants stated that they viewed it as a course that improves character development, samples all aspects of the democratic lifestyle, and teaches that everyone has equal rights. Some teacher views were as follows.

- *If taught properly, this course teaches how to be a good citizen (T.1).*
- *It teaches students to look out for their rights (T2).*
- *It aims to teach conscious citizens how to demand your rights legally when they are breached (T.3).*
- *I really value this course as it teaches the requirements of democratic life (T4).*
- *I see it as a course that serves to train children as*

**Table 1.** Distribution of the theme "views on the civic and human rights education" into subthemes

Themes	Subthemes	Number
Views on the Civic and Human Rights Education course	*A course that teaches the requirements of a democratic life and informs about human rights	31
	*A course that teaches civic rights and responsibilities	29
	*A course that teaches everyone has equal rights, prepares students for life and contributes to personal development	26

**Table2.** Distribution of the theme "objectives of the the civic and human rights education Course" into subthemes

Theme	Subthemes	Number
Achievement level of the objectives of the Civic and Human Rights education course	*Objectives are not met.	23
	*Objectives are partially met.	6
	*Objectives are met.	2

**Table3.** Distribution of the theme "reasons for failing to meet the objectives of the civic and human rights education course" into subthemes

Theme	Subthemes	Number
Reasons for Failing to Meet the Objectives of the Civic and Human Rights Education course	*Lack of a democratic environment at schools and classrooms	20
	*The theoretical nature of the course	20
	*Negative events and news in visual and print media	17
	*Parent attitudes	12

*democratically conscious citizens who know how to demand their rights in line with democracy (T.5).*

### Findings on the objectives of the civic and human rights education Course

The views of participants about the achievement level of the civic and human rights course objectives can be seen in subthemes in Table 2.

Table 2 reveals that while two participants stated that course objectives were met, six stated that they were partially met, and 23 stated that they were not met. Considering the latter two together, it may be stated that the majority (29) agreed that the objectives of the civic and human rights education COURSE were not met. Teacher views on the underlying reasons for that are given in Table 3 in subthemes.

Table 3 displays that 20 participants believed that the reason for failing to meet course objectives was "lack of

a civic and human rights environment at schools and classrooms", 20 believed that it was "the theoretical nature of the course", 17 believed that it was the "negative events and news in print and visual media", and 12 believed that it was "parent attitudes".

Below are some sample views from teachers why objectives of the course civic and human rights education could not be met.

- *The course content is theoretical. We cannot teach practical real-life topics (T2).*
- *Newspapers and TV show so many bad examples about democracy and human rights that children believe these rather than what they are taught at school (T3).*
- *Schools lack a democratic environment to set an example (T:6).*
- *Parent attitudes conflict with the information taught through this course (T7).*
- *Neither families nor schools are able to teach children humanistic values and their responsibilities to others as*

**Table 4.** Distribution of the theme "contents of the civic and human rights education course" into subthemes

Theme	Subthemes	Number
Opinions on course content	*Contents are inadequate	21
	*Contents are partially adequate	6
	*Contents are fully adequate	4

**Table 5.** Distribution of the theme "reasons why contents of the civic and human rights education course are inadequate" into subthemes

Theme	Subthemes	Number
Reasons why contents of the Civic and Human Rights Education course are inadequate	*Contradiction between course content and real-life events	27
	*Theoretical course contents	20
	*Lack of up-to-date and concrete examples	15

*attitudes (T.8).*

- *Non-democratic teacher and parent attitudes contradict with those taught in class. Therefore, classroom learning cannot be seen in real behaviors. Children become irritable and disrespectful (T10).*

### **Findings on the contents of the civic and human rights education course**

The views of teachers on the contents of the civic and human rights education course are shown in Table 4 in subthemes.

A total of 21 participants viewed the contents of the civic and human rights education course as inadequate. If we add the 6 who thought the contents to be partially adequate, 27 participants were not satisfied with the contents of the civic and human rights education course. The reasons behind this are given in Table 5.

As shown in Table 5, 27 participants blamed the inadequacy of course contents on "the contradiction between course contents and real-life events", while 20 blamed it on the "theoretical course content". Similarly, 15 participants stated that "lack of up-to-date and concrete examples" is the reason. Some of the opinions about why the contents of civic and human rights education course we thought to be inadequate are given below.

- *As the Civic and Human Rights Education course involves theoretical information, students cannot acquire real life behaviors (T.9).*

- *The information needs updating and more practicality (T12).*

- *We have difficulty making the topics more concrete. Therefore, students merely memorize with no meaningful learning (T.16).*

- *The information in the course does not translate to real life (T7).*

- *In fact, all teachers should primarily focus on democracy and civic education (T.19).*

### **Findings on the implementation of the course civic and human rights education**

The views of the participants on the "implementation of the course civic and human rights education are given below in Table 6.

According to Table 6, 20 participants stated that they used "lecturing and question-answer methods" as they taught the course civic and human rights education, seven used "repetition and memorization", while four assigned the topics as homework. Some views about the implementation of the course are given below.

- *I teach the topic but ask students to prepare at home. As - I teach, I ask questions and elicit opinions (T.23).*

- *As the topics are mostly abstract, I prefer to explain the topics myself (T8).*

- *I give home assignments about the topics and make students explain them. Then I give a summary and complete any missing parts (T.18).*

- *As I teach, I keep asking about previous topics to help them retain their knowledge (T.5).*

### **Findings on the problems and solutions that teacher identified in the course civic and human rights education**

The participants were asked about the "problems they faced as they taught the course civic and human rights

**Table 6.** Distribution of the theme "implementation of the civic and human rights education course" into subthemes

Theme	Subthemes	Number
Implementation of the course Civic and Human Rights education	*Lecturing and question-answer	20
	*Repetition and memorization	7
	*Assigning topics as homework	4

**Table 7.** Distribution of the theme "problems faced in the civic and human rights education course" into subthemes

Theme	Subthemes	Number
Main problems in the Civic and Human Rights Education course	*Not viewing children as adolescents	25
	*Principals and teachers not setting good role models	18
	*Inadequate class hours	9
	*Overcrowded classes	7
	*Lack of a democratic family environment	7

**Table 8.** Distribution of the theme "solutions to the problems faced in the the civic and human rights education course" into subthemes

Theme	Subthemes	Number
Solutions proposed for the problems in the the Civic and Human Rights Education course	*A democratic environment should be established at schools.	27
	*A teacher's handbook should be prepared to implement the course	25
	*TV should create more room for programs on democracy, civic knowledge and human rights.	18
	*Cooperation should be established with NGOs.	15
	*Seminars and visits should be offered to families.	10
	*The course should be taught by field experts.	6

Education" and their solutions to these. The problems are shown in Table 7. Table 7 indicates that most participants (25 teachers) perceived "not seeing students as adolescents" as a major problem. On the other hand, 18 mentioned "the failure of principals and teachers in becoming role models", and 9 mentioned "inadequate class hours".

Seven participants mentioned "overcrowded classes" and "lack of a democratic family environment" as the reason. Below are some of the opinions on the problems experienced in the course.

- *Student rights are not honored (T2).*
- *When children are treated democratically, they conceive this as a concession and become more disrespectful. This is because their families don't teach them these concepts (T.6).*
- *Class sizes are so big that we feel forced to use*

*restrictions to maintain authority (T.10).*

- *Children develop a negative perception of Civic and Human Rights Education when they come across teachers who use violence and set a bad example (T.3).*
- *The contradiction between the organizational culture of schools and the contents of the Civic and Human Rights Education Course creates a dilemma for children (T.8).*
- *Most families are not democratic (T11).*

The solutions proposed by participants for the problems faced in the civic and human rights education course are given in subthemes in Table 8. Of the participants, 27 proposed "the establishment of a democratic environment at schools" and 25 proposed "a teacher's handbook on course implementation". This was followed by the proposal of 18 participants that "TV should show more programs on democracy, civic knowledge and human rights". Fifteen participants proposed that "cooperation

should be established with non governmental organization (NGOs)", 10 proposed that "families should be offered informative seminars and visits", while 6 proposed that "the course be taught by field experts".

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicated that the civic and human rights education course is viewed as one that informs students about civic rights and duties. Teacher responses suggested that course objectives had been perceived accurately and the course is valued. However, there seems to be a serious contradiction between their opinions on course objectives and their own actions towards this study. This causes doubts about how teachers can establish a democratic environment for their students when they themselves worry about democracy at their schools.

Most participants also stated that the objectives of the civic and human rights education course were not met and its contents were not adequate. This view resembles the finding of Koca (1998) that "teachers believed that the written objectives of the civic and human rights education curriculum could not be fully met with the existing content". Gözütok (1998), Türker (1999) and Güdücü (2008) also obtained similar results in their respective studies.

Teachers stated that they mostly preferred classical methods of implementations such as lecturing and question-answer. This finding corroborates earlier findings that teachers who teach social studies, a course which includes the teaching of the civic and human rights education, use lecturing and question-answer (Kalaycı, 2001; Yılmaz, 2002; Başaran, 2007; Kan, 2009). Naturally, if the course is taught through traditional methods, their objectives could not be met. The teacher-centered methods and techniques used in this course may also have caused this. Indeed, Table 2 shows that 23 participants agreed that course objectives could not be met. Assigning topics as homework or merely repeating them will not be enough to teach the attitudes and behaviors aimed by the course. As is the case for other courses, the civic and human rights education may also benefit from using learning by doing and active learning. Indeed, it is argued that the topics of the the civic and human rights education course should be taught through effective learning methods and techniques that promote real-life critical thinking, discussion and problem-solving (Chapman et al., 1997: 366).

The view that the contents of the the civic and human rights education course are not adequate due to its theoretical and abstract nature is supported by Karaman and Kepenekçi's (2005) study on the effectiveness of the civic and human rights education course in Turkish elementary schools. Practice is the best, if not the only, way of teaching democratic ideals such as tolerance,

responsibility, solidarity, rights, agreement and participation. Lister (1982:11) states that these attitudes and behaviors must first be displayed by teachers and then practiced together with students. Similarly, he states that democracy can be taught within the school culture and with self-learning (Tibbits, 1994:364). It is of utmost importance that teachers and principals create a school culture that is in line with their attitudes and behaviors concerning democracy and human rights.

The majority of teachers pinpointed "not viewing students as adolescents" as the most serious problem in the civic and human rights education course. Teachers view students as children who are not ready to understand civic and human rights rather than seeing those students as young citizens. It would be unfair and wrong to expect these children to develop attitudes regarding democracy, and civic and human rights. As a result of this, today's generations have difficulty deciding what is right or wrong, and what is good or bad (Yel and Aladağ, 2009: 124-125). At the heart of human rights lies the idea that all humans have equal moral value regardless of their differences. In other words, the source of human rights is the equal moral nature of all humans (Drucer 1994: 19). Human rights are basically about independence; they denote the freedom of individuals to act in accordance with their own judgments and aims (Erdoğan, 2001: 134).

The first and foremost solution proposed to the problems in the civic and human rights education course was "establishing a democratic environment at schools". According to Gömleksiz (1988:17 to 29), class environment is the main factor that affects student involvement in school activities and the organizational structure of the school is the main factor that affects students' political attitudes. The presence of a democratic class environment not only maximizes student achievement but also helps students develop democratic attitudes and behaviors. Democracy can only be learned through practice in a democratic environment. If teachers at all stages of education can display tolerant, respectful, unbiased, open, guiding, helpful and consistent democratic behaviors towards their students, this will undoubtedly be more effective than any democracy lesson. Therefore, democratic attitudes and practices of teachers and school principals will contribute significantly to creating democratic attitudes and behaviors among children.

The suggestion that a teacher's handbook should be prepared to guide teachers in the civic and human rights education course shows that there are problems with the implementation of the course. Indeed, Tables 3 and 5 also show that the majority of participants believed that course objectives could not be met due to the theoretical and abstract nature of the course and its contents were inadequate.

The majority of participants (18) advocated the view that TV should broadcast more programs on democracy, civic knowledge and human rights. Indeed, violent

programs on TV where strong people with bad motives win over weaker but better ones, films and shows that overlook human rights set a bad example for children. Programs that set good examples for students regarding the civic and human rights education may help raise youngsters with democratic attitudes who know their rights and respect those of others. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations may be made:

- The civic and human rights education course needs to be taught by persons with adequate information and skills in this field. To this end, it may be useful to organize seminars and in-service training programs for teachers who come from other majors. This would enable teachers to become role models for students.

Successful civic education requires a participatory school culture.

- Teacher's handbooks may be written to guide teachers in implementing the civic and human rights education course more functionally and in line with its objectives.

Print and visual media may broadcast programs to help children develop an awareness of democracy, human rights, and civic rights and responsibilities.

- Families may be informed on the civic and human rights education. Home visits may be made to explain that a democratic attitude in family-child relationships may help child development.

- If the topics of the the civic and human rights education course are taught cyclically in grades 5, 6 and 7, more permanent knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and values may be engendered in students.

In order to foster democratic attitudes and behaviors in children, future studies may be more comprehensive, and they may focus on the Civic and Human Rights Education curriculum and how to teach the course better.

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