THE EVALUATION OF THE QUALIFICATIONS OF TEACHERS WORKING WITH STUDENTS WITH AUTISM IN TURKEY IN TERMS OF VIEWS OF TEACHERS AND PARENTS

[1]Yahya Çıkılı, [2]Hakan Sarı, Serdal Deniz [3]

Necmettin Erbakan Üniversity, Faculty of Education, Special Education Department, Konya/TURKEY
[1]ycikili@hotmail.com; [2]hakansari@gmail.com;
[3] serdaldeniz1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Individuals with a diagnosis of autism are placed in different educational environment depending on the characteristics and needs. In the process of determining the educational environment, the individuals should be placed the most appropriate educational environment starting from the least limited environments and considering the characteristics and needs. According to the Special Education Services Regulation (2012), these individuals no matter which institution they are, teachers need to prepare the individualized education program, because individuals with autism may show different characteristics. Teachers are the most important elements with the regards to the expected positive results from the education of the Autistic individuals. The main tasks of the teachers are planning, admimistering and evaluating of educational activities. It is emphasized that the teachers should be educated with the knowledge of the field, world knowledge and professional teaching knowledge. In this sense, it is expected that the teachers who work with individuals with autism should have knowledge about the autism, the education of autistic individuals, scientific based education and training applications used in training individuals with autism. In the researches, the families with children with autism stated that they need the support to help their children, provide appropriate support services.

This research is related with the efficiencies that should be of the teachers working in the field of autism, determined in reference to the families and the teachers working in the field. 23 families and 24 teachers from Konya, Edirne and Afyon provinces joined to the research. The research data were obtained from semi-structured interview form. The obtained data were analyzed descriptively. According to the findings; it is determined that the teachers should have efficiencies in the behavior modification, usage of the appropriate methods and techniques, knowledge about autism, effective communication, effective communication with the family and environment, being tolerant, being patient, planning and applying the teaching.

Keywords: *Autism, special education teacher, teachers' efficiencies.*

INTRODUCTION

Individuals who were diagnosed with autism can continue their education in different educational environments. No matter which educational environment they are in, autistic individuals are expected to develop independent living skills in the educational process, because education is defined as the process of behavior changing (Ertürk, 1994; Ergün et al., 1999). Autistic individuals are different from other handicapped in terms of the behaviours they exhibit and their capabilities. (Hallahan and Kauffman, 1997; Friend, 2006; Heward, 2003; Diken, 2008; Baykoç, 2014). Autism is defined as a developmental disability which presents itself with communication and behavior disorders (Kırcaali-İftar, 2012). There are sub-categories related to autism spectrum disorders, but DSM-5 adopted a three level scaleand

the basic characteristics are defined as social communication, limited interests, and repetitive behaviors (Ertuğrul, 2013). Without the appropriate educational arrangements, autism becomes a lifelong handicap that affects the lives of the individuals and the people around them. With necessary arrangements, many autistic children can get rid of these problems at a great extend, and continue their lives with their peers who exhibit regular development, and the society (Güleç Aslan, Kırcaali İftar, Uzuner, 2009). Research shows that use of scientific methods and techniques in their education can result in positive behavior changes among autistic individuals (Güleç Aslan, Kırcaali İftar, Uzuner, 2009; De Boer, 2013; Ben-Arieh, 2013; Charlop-Christy, 2013; Stichter and Conroy, 2013).

Teachers are one of the most important elements of education process. Teachers are primarily responsible for the planning, implementation, and assessment of education process (Ertürk, 1994; Büyükkaragöz and Çivi, 1994; Bilen, 2002; Ergün et al. 1999; Polloway, Serna, Patton, Bailey, 2013; Borich, 2014). From this perspective, teachers need to prepare and implement individualized educational programs considering the individual features and needs of autistic individuals (Sarı and İlik, 2014; Avcıoğlu, 2015).

In these terms; the qualifications expected from the teachers of autistic individuals are defined as to be able to communicate with the students (Prodromou, 1991), knowing students, their needs and skills well (Yeşilyurt, 2006), to able to enable student participation and assess achievement (Aksu, 2000), to be able define lack of knowledge and skills among students and take necessary precautions (Erden, 2007), to able to focus on the target, plan and solve problems (Stix, Hrbek, 2006), and approach students in a flexible manner (Stronge, 2007).

A research conducted by Turkish Ministry of National Education (MEB) defined the necessary competencies that teachers need to have. These competencies are defined as general competencies and field specific competencies. Field specific competence domains include the special education field. Within the special education field are, teaching visually handicapped, hearing handicapped, mentally retarded children domains. Teacher competencies for special education field include communication and social competencies, adapting educational programs, cooperation with school, family and other professional groups, behavior management and professional development sub-domains (MEB, 2008). Within the extent of Council of Higher Education (YÖK) Development of National Education Project, pre-service teacher competencies are split into field knowledge, planning, education process, classroom management, communication, assessment, and recording and other professional competencies categories (YÖK, 1998).

There has been some research on teacher competencies, but there are no researches on the competencies of teachers who serve for the education of autistic individuals. For this reason, the purpose of the present research is evaluating the qualifications of teachers working with autistic students in Turkey in terms of teacher and parent views.

Purpose

The main purpose of the present research is evaluating the qualifications of teachers working with autistic students in Turkey in terms of teacher and parent views. In accordance with this main purpose, the present research seeks answers to the following questions.

1. What are the views of parents about the qualifications that teachers who work with autistic students in Turkey should have?

2. What are the views of teachers about the qualifications that teachers who work with autistic students in Turkey should have?

METHODOLOGY

The present research is qualitative research, the purpose of which is evaluating the qualifications of teachers working with autistic students in Turkey in terms of teacher and parent views. Qualitative researches use qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview, and document analysis, and aim at presenting incidents in their natural environments in a realistic and holistic manner (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). Data collected in the present research were obtained through semi-structured interview forms, because interview technique is considered as the most efficient data collection technique for qualitative research process (Punch, 2005; Geray, 2006; Kuş, 2012).

Literature review was conducted to prepare the interview form, and the questions in the interview form were created based on obtained information. The questions were presented to three field specialists for their opinions and the questions were re-organized in accordance with their opinions. The pre-implementation of the interview form was conducted with 5 teachers.

Twenty-three parents and 24 teachers participated in the present research. Sixteen of the participants are mothers and 7 of them are fathers. Sixteen of the teachers are female and 8 of them are male. Age range for the participants is 35-50.

Data Collection

For the implementation of the interview form, volunteers among the parents who had autistic children, and teachers who serve at schools where autistic children were educated were determined. A participation contract was signed with volunteer parents and teachers. For the interview, appointments were made with the teachers and parents, and the interviews were conducted on the appointed day and time. The questions were asked orally to the participants, and their answers were recorded by the interviewer in writing. The interviews took around 25 minutes.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was conducted on data collected through semi-structures interview forms. After studying the obtained data, common concepts were defined, and the frequencies and percentages of the findings are presented.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

This part includes findings related to the views of parents and teachers working with autistic children about the qualifications teachers should have.

Table 1. Knowledge domains of the participating parents about their children's incompetencies

Knowledge domain	f	%
Autism	8	35
Education of autistic children	8	35
Nutrition in autism	4	17
Care of autistic children	3	13
Total	**23**	**100**

Table 1 shows that 35% of the participating parents consider themselves competent in the autism domain, 35% consider themselves competent in the domain of education of autistic children, 17% of them consider themselves in the domain of nutrition in autism, and 13% of the consider themselves competent in the domain of care of autistic children.

Table 2. Information resources of the participating parents

Information resources	f	%
Teacher	5	22
Internet	5	22
Experience	4	17
Doctor	4	17
Books/Magazines	2	9
Other parents	1	4
Psychologist	1	4
Seminar/Conference	1	4
Total	**23**	**100**

Table 2 shows that most of the parents get information from the teachers and the Internet. This finding indicates that parents try to get information from various resources. This finding also indicates that parents of autistic children cannot get enough information about the education of their children from the teachers.

Table 3. Qualifications teachers should have according to the participating parents

Teacher qualifications	f	%
Behavior change	6	26
Appropriate method and technique selection	4	17
Knowledge of autism	3	13
Effective communication	3	13
Tolerance	2	9
Effective communication with parents and the environment	2	9
Patience	2	9
Planning and implementation of education	1	4
Total	**23**	**100**

Table 3 shows that, 6 of the parents think teachers should be competent in behavior change, 4 think teacher should be competent in selection and implementation of appropriate methods and techniques, 3 think teachers should have knowledge of autism, 3 think teachers should have effective communication skills, 2 think teachers should be tolerant, 2 think

teachers should be able to communicate with the parents and the environment effectively, 2 think teachers should be patient and 1 of them thinks teachers should be competent in planning and implementing the education.

Table 4. Views of participating teachers about their competencies in the education of autistic children

Views about competence of self	**f**	**%**
I feel incompetent	19	79
I feel competent	5	21
Total	**24**	**100**

Data presented in Table 4 show that, 19 of the participant teachers feel incompetent about the education of autistic children, and 21% of them feel competent. These findings indicate that an important part of the teachers consider themselves incompetent about the education of autistic children.

Table 5. Qualifications teachers should have according to the participating teachers

Teacher qualifications	**f**	**%**
Patience	6	25
Tolerance	5	21
Knowledge of autism	4	17
Planning and implementation of education	3	13
Appropriate method and technique selection	2	8
Effective communication with parents and the environment	2	8
Behavior change	1	4
Self confidence	1	4
Total	**24**	**100**

Table 5 shows that, 6 of the teachers think that teachers working with autistic children should be patient, 5 think that teachers should be tolerant, 4 think that teachers should have knowledge of autism, 3 think that teachers should be competent in planning and implementation of education, 2 think that teachers should be competent in appropriate method and technique selection, 2 think that teachers should be able to communicate with the parents and environment effectively, 1 thinks that teachers should be competent in behavior change, and 1 thinks that teachers should be self-confident.

DISCUSSION

The present research found that, parents of autistic children found themselves competent about their children's autism, education, nutrition, and care. It was also found that, parents use various resources to get information about autism. Parent primarily consult to teachers, and doctors, and use Internet, their personal experience. Parents use more than one resource, which indicates that they cannot get the information they need from one resource. At this point, it is interesting that they cannot make enough use of books/magazines and seminars/conferences. This finding may suggest that these resources cannot address to parents.

Among the qualifications parents think teachers should have are the competence in behavior change, and use of appropriate methods and techniques. This finding is in agreement with the findings of other researches in literature (Güleç Aslan, Kırcaali İftar, Uzuner, 2009; De Boer, 2013; Ben-Arieh, 2013; Charlop-Christy, 2013; Stichter and Conroy, 2013). Additionally, parents expect teachers to be competent in planning and implementing education. This finding is in agreement with Sarı's (2014) and Avcıoğlu's (2015) findings that teachers should plan and implement education programs considering the individual features and needs of autistic individuals. Another finding that, parents expect teachers working with autistic students be able to communicate effectively, have field knowledge, competent in planning and implementing education, and tolerant towards students is in agreement with YÖK (1998), MEB (2008), and Stronge (2007).

Teachers who participated in the present research reported that they found themselves incompetent about the education of autistic children. Analysis of YÖK teaching programs shows that knowledge and courses about autism in special education and other teaching branches is not at the expected level, which is in agreement with this finding of the present research.

Another interesting finding of the present research is that, parents' and teachers' expectations from the teachers working with autistic children are similar. Both groups of participants defined the qualifications of good teachers as competence in selecting appropriate methods and techniques, tolerance, patience, field knowledge, competence in behavior change, and effective communication skills.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The purpose of the present research was evaluating the qualifications of teachers working with autistic students in Turkey in terms of teacher and parent views. The present research found that parents use various resources to get information about autism, and consider themselves competent about autism, education, nutrition, and care of autistic children. It was also found that, teachers working with autistic children didn't find themselves competent in the education of autistic children, and the qualifications expected from teachers working with autistic children defined by both parents and teachers were similar. These qualifications were, field knowledge of autism, competence in appropriate method and techniques, patience, tolerance, to be able to change behaviors, and positive communication skills. The following suggestions can be offered in accordance with these findings.

1- Further researches should be conducted about the qualifications teachers working with autistic children have.
2- Pre-service teachers to work with autistic children should have classes and courses about autistic children during their pre-service.
3- Teachers working at environments where autistic children are educated should have in-service training.

REFERENCES

[1] Aksu, M. (2000). Yükseköğretimde Eğitim Ortamları, Öğretim Birliğinin 75. Yılı Eğitim Bilimlerinin Dünü Bugünü ve Yarını. Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi.

[2] Aslan, Y.G., Kırcaali İftar, G., Uzuner, Y. (2009). Otistik Çocuklar İçin Davranışsal Eğitim Programı (OÇİDEP) Ev Uygulamasının Bir Çocukla İncelenmesi. A.Ü. Eğitim Bil. Fak. Özel Eğitim Dergisi, 10 (1), 1-25.

[3] Avcıoğlu, H. (2015). A'dan Z'ye BEP. Ankara: Vize Yayıncılık.

[4] Ben-Arieh, J. (2013). Ortak Dikkat ve İlgi Rutinleri Nasıl Kullanılır? (Çev. S. Topbaş, A. Kılıç). Detay Yayıncılık.

[5] Bilen, M. (2002). Plandan Uygulaaya öğretim. Ankara: anı Yayınları.

[6] Borich, G. D. (2014). Effective Teaching Mathods. Pearson Education Inc.

[7] Büyükkaragöz, S., Çivi, C. (1994). Genel Öğretim Metotları. Konya; Atlas Kitabevi.

[8] Charlop Christy, M. H. (2013). Fırsat öğretimi Nasıl Yapılır? (Çev. S. Topbaş, A. Kılıç). Detay Yayıncılık.

[9] De Boer, S. J. (2013). Ayrık Denemelerle Öğretim Nasıl Yapılır? (Çev. S. Topbaş, A. Akyüz-Toğram). Detay Yayıncılık.

[10] Erdem, E (2007). Eğitimde Yeni Yönelimler. (Ö. Demirel, Ed.). Probleme Dayalı Öğrenme. Ankara: Pegema YAyıncılık.

[11] Ergün, M., diğ. (1999). Öğretmenlik Mesleğine Giriş. Ankara: Ocak Yayınları.

[12] Ertürk, S. (1994). Eğitimde Program Geliştirme, Ankara: Meteksan.

[13] Fidan, N., Erden, M. (Eğitim Bilimine Giriş, Ankara: Kadıoğlu Matbaası.

[14] Friend, M. (2006). Special Education. Pearson Education Inc.

[15] Geray, H. (2006). Toplumsal Araştırmalarda Nicel ve Nitel Yöntemlere Giriş. Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi.

[16] Hallahan, P. D., Kauffman, M. J. (1997). Exceptional Learners: Introduction to special education. Boston: Allyn Bacon.

[17] Heward, W. L., (2003). Exceptional Children: An introduction to special education. Columbus, OH: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

[18] Köroğlu, E. (2013). DSM-5 Tanı Ölçütleri. Ankara: Hekimler Yayın Birliği.

[19] MEB (2008), Öğretmen Yeterlikleri. Ankara.

[20] Polloway, E. A., Serna, L., Patton, J. R., Bailey, J. W. (2013). Strategies for Teaching Learner with Special Needs. Pearson Education Inc.

[21] Punch, K. F. (2005). Introduction to Social Research Quantitative and Qualitative Approach, (Çev. D. Bayrak, H. B. arslan, Z. Akyüz). Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi.

[22] Sarı, H., İlik, Ş, Ş. (2014). Bireyselleştirilmiş Eğitim Programı. Ankara: Vize Yayıncılık.

[23] Stichter, J. P., Conroy, M. A. (2013). Sosyal Beceriler Nasıl Öğretilir ve Akran Sosyal Etkileşimi Nasıl Planlanır? (Çev. S. Topbaş, E. Cangi). Detay Yayıncılık.

[24] Stronge, J. H., Tucker, P. D., Hindman, J. L. (2004). Ahndbook Qualitative of Effective Teacher. Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

[25] Yeşilyaprak, E. (2006). Öğretmenlerin Öğretim Araç ve Gereçlerini Kullanma Durumlarını Etkileyen Faktörler. Elazığ: Fırat Üni. Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.

[26] Yıldırım, A., Şimşek, H. (2008). Sosyal Bilimlerde Nitel Araştırma Yöntemleri. Ankara: Seçkin Yayınevi.

[27] YÖK (1998). Fakülte-Okul İşbirliği. YÖK/Dünya Bankası, Milli eğitimi Geliştirme Projesi Hizmetöncesi Öğretmen Eğitimi. Ankara.