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Communications of teachers working in schools at different socio-economic levels with their students and other teachers

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Abstract

The human, who has always needed other humans to continue his survival from past to present, is social. And the most important one of the means which makes living together possible is communication. For this reason, communication is natural and inevitable like eating to exist and live. The aim of this study made by moving from this importance is to examine the communications of teachers working in schools at different socio-economic statuses with their students and other teachers. Teachers directed to raising an information society individual to be healthy, their ways of setting up communication with their students and other teachers are important as well.

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1. Introduction

The human, who has always needed other humans to continue his survival from past to present, is social. And the most important one of the means which makes living together possible is communication. For this reason, communication is natural and inevitable like eating to exist and live. In order to understand ourselves, our environment and society to which we belong, effective communication is required. In our day, imperfections in communication skills underlie problems in interpersonal relationships and many psychological disorders appear as a result of these problems. Communication is a very important process which arranges human relations. Cüceloglu (1984) defines communication as a term referring to the exchange of interpersonal thoughts and emotions. Thus, communication forms an inevitable dimension of the life of the human as a social being. The information society is based on technology, communication and the human. Both parties' being clear and spending effort to figure out both their own and other's behaviors appear as prominent features among the effective communication skills identified by Schmuck and Schmuck (1988). These features, also included in the suggestions brought forward by Anderson (1991), make the establishment of effective communication possible in the classroom. Anderson gathered these suggestions under three dimensions, namely informing and explaining, questioning and feedback (McKay et al.,

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2006). One of the factors determining teachers' tendency toward controlling their students is their expectations related to their students. Especially, variables such as students' abilities, socioeconomic levels, races, social classes, genders, personalities, physical appearances, speech patterns, and previous academic successes have an important effect on this (Balci, 2001). Primary educational institutions occupy an important place in the educational process of an individual and the goal of primary educational institutions is to have students acquire basic knowledge. Children encounter a lot of matters in social sense during primary education which they have to overcome. For instance, communication with adults with whom they are not acquainted in the crowd, processes related to organization such as aligning, lining up and waiting, being addressed as a member of a group, and obeying to restrictions about matters such as movement and noise are among these (Dean, 2000). Concerning group works having positive contributions to forming a healthy atmosphere for communication, Reid et al., (1987) found out in their study that having children work in groups helps them with some matters such as generating more ideas in a cooperative environment, explaining them to one another by using language and communication patterns, asking questions and learning from one another, developing new information and becoming aware of their own experiences in acquisition, sharing ideas in a critical mass and gaining self-confidence as a student, being conscious of the differences between explanatory speech and verbal presentation, developing feeling of responsibility toward the group and encouraging self-discipline. Moreover, Reid et al., determined in their study that group- works enable children to give healthy feedback in twos mutually during the feedback following the completion of a group task and play a role in the realization of an effective learning (Dean, 2000). In addition to these, communications of children with their family members is important as well. Dornbusch et al. (1990), in their study, examined parents-children relationships through taking the verbal communication between parents and children and its quality, positive emotional relationship, expectations of the family, parents' beliefs regarding their children, and their understanding of control into consideration and determined variables. It was concluded that the gender, age, ethnicity and education level of the person who is the student parent in the family is important as well. In the study by Dean (2000), it was concluded that it is important that teachers should consider the structure of the classroom while developing social communication in the classroom and relationships in a group, and have children make practices within the context of social experiences with their friends. Types of families show varieties according to their socio-economic statuses, too. Low SES extended family is the family type composed of many families coming from a common ancestor and sheltering a few generations together. The extended family is the family type composed of many families coming from a common ancestor and embodying a few generations together. A hierarchical order is dominant in this family type. Old people have authority over young ones, men over women, and elder siblings over younger ones (Elmacioglu, 2000). And with the present study, too, an answer is sought to the question "What is the nature of the communications of the teachers working in schools at low, middle and upper socio-economic statuses with their students and other teachers?" In order for works and practices of strategies used by teachers directed to raising an information society individual to be healthy, their ways of setting up communication with their students and other teachers are important as well. The aim of this study made by moving from this importance is to examine the communications of teachers working in schools at different socio-economic statuses with their students and other teachers.

2. Method

Since it is aimed in this study to investigate the communications of teachers working in schools at different socio-economic statuses with their students and other teachers, the model used in the study is evaluated within the context of the survey model. In the selection of the sample made by considering socio-economic status, a total of 50 teachers and 50 students were included from 5 schools representing high, middle and low SES. The students were 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th grade students. They were addressed various questions included in the data collection tools to determine the socio-economic statuses of families and it was found that the mentioned schools fell into the SES levels specified in the present study.

In this study, questions were addressed face to face to teachers through interviews and answers were evaluated. During the formation of the questionnaire items, persons specialized in their fields were asked for their opinions and the draft was developed. The answers were tabulated and examined in frequencies. Because the questions were open minded questions and the answers are important for their views and opinions.

3. Findings

In order for works and practices of strategies used by teachers directed to raising an information society individual to be healthy, their ways of setting up communication with their students and other teachers are important

as well. For this purpose, the answers given by the teachers to the question “Which methods are you using to continue your communication with students?” were tabulated according to socio-economic level.

Table 1- Teachers’ Ways of Setting-Up Communication with Students

Answers	SES (f)		
	Low	Low	High
I ask questions in the lessons.	5	3	-
I make face-to-face talks.	5	5	-
I approach friendly, affectionately and understandingly.	5	-	9
My communication is not at the desired level (class size is big).	1	-	-
I develop empathy.	1	3	3
I try to become a friend or a mother.	1	-	-
I make use of guidance oriented inventories.	1	1	-
My communication is based on cooperation, absolutely based on love.	-	-	7

While the teachers working in the low SES schools set up communications with their students mostly by asking questions in the lessons, holding face-to-face interviews, and behaving toward them friendly, affectionately and understandingly and patiently, the ones working in the middle SES schools set up communication with their students by speaking face-to-face and using guidance oriented inventories. The teachers working in the high SES schools approach to their students in a friendly and affectionately and prefer the ways of communication based on cooperation.

Table 2- Communications of Teachers with their Students

Answers	SES (f)		
	Low	Middle	High
Good.	11	5	3
Very good.	8	5	5
My communication with students is not at desired level.	2	-	-
Good as long as I can teach according to their levels.	2	-	-
It is regarded as normal in this school. I would like it to be at high level.	2	-	-
My communication with them is good since I always establish empathy.	-	2	3
Students can explain about their ideas to me comfortably both in the lesson and outside the classroom. They can share their problems and happinesses.	-	-	2

As seen in Table 2, teachers at low SES evaluated their communications with their students generally as “good” or “very good”.

Table 3- Teachers’ Opinions about Inter-Teacher Communication/Interaction and Cooperation

Answers	SES (f)		
	Low	Middle	High
Sufficient.	10	7	8
Insufficient.	2	7	1
I try to set up mutual and close communication with my colleagues and all other teachers.	1	-	-
Teachers from different branches are in communication with one another.	-	1	7
A negative interaction among teachers’ lowers motivation, but a positive cooperation and communication definitely enhances teacher performance.	-	-	3
Resulting from the system of the school, but team-work is required to develop more. This is present in our school, but it needs making more effective by searching for modern techniques. I can say that there are insufficiencies. There are many works being carried out about the matter. They can be given as in-service training by following.	-	-	3

When the opinions of the teachers working in the low and high SES schools about inter-teacher communication/interaction and cooperation are examined, it appears that they usually regard themselves as sufficient; the answers given by those working in the middle SES schools are observed to be close to each other as being “sufficient” and “insufficient”. Moreover, it is remarkable that cooperation is usually observed between the same branches.

Table 4- Students' Ways of Setting-Up Communication with their Teachers

Answers	SES (f)		
	Low	Middle	High
I set up face-to-face communication.	6	4	12
I can always speak comfortably without refraining from.	9	-	2
I set up communication sometimes good sometimes bad.	3	-	-
I set up communication with my teacher only in lessons by speaking.	1	-	-
I have difficulty in speaking.	1	-	-
When I have problems, I share them.	1	-	-
I'm not very sincere. I speak when I have problems.	1	-	-
I talk with my teacher usually when I have problems.	-	3	-
I cannot talk in crowded environments. I sometimes get excited when I'm alone.	-	2	-
I set up communication in the lesson by raising my hand and outside the lesson, during the break-time, by asking questions	-	1	-
I have good relationships with others. For example, I play chess or a Chinese game called "GO". I see them as my friends.	-	-	1
I never talk with some friends; I talk with some friends only by asking questions; I talk with some friends face-to-face.	-	-	1
First I watch and look into eyes. Then, when necessary, I can talk very comfortably.	-	-	1
I talk with my teacher when I become successful or by taking the floor.	-	-	1

It was found that the students at all SES levels, particularly at high SES level, set up very good face-to-face communication with their teachers most of the time. The presence of mutual respect and empathy in teacher-student communication facilitates communication. Moreover, when the answers given by the students at high SES schools are taken into consideration, they appear to set up good communication with their teachers.

4. Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

Under the light of the findings obtained from the present study, it can be concluded that the students at the low SES schools can set up communication with their teachers comfortably with no hesitation. While the students at the middle SES schools emphasized the fact that they talked with their teachers when they had problems, set up communication in environments which were not crowded, and it was important for them to win their teachers' trust, those at the high SES schools expressed that they had good communication with their teachers and shared their problems by means of asking questions and face-to-face talks. The students at the low SES schools expressed that their teachers were empathetic, patient and at the same time disciplined. The students at the middle SES schools, in addition to these answers, described their teachers as helpful, friendly, those knowing how to motivate. The students at the high SES schools think that their teachers behave toward them in a patient, empathetic, helpful and sincere manner. The students defined the type of an ideal teacher in different ways. The students at the low SES schools defined an ideal teacher as the one who is good-teaching, perfect, a friend, a close friend, empathetic, and patient. While the ones at the middle SES schools defined an ideal teacher as the one who is patient, empathetic, good-teaching, loves his/her students, helps them, and is a democrat, those at the high SES schools defined an ideal teacher as the one who is confidential, setting up good communication, establishing empathy, patient and interested, not beating, approaching friendly, and fair. It is observed that although inter-teacher communication is at good level at the low SES schools, it is not at the sufficient level. The teachers at the low SES schools think that their teaching experience is not at sufficient level. It was determined that the teacher-student communication was based on love, respect and tolerance. The teachers in the low SES schools expressed that they set up communication with their students mostly by talking with them, using body language, and behaving toward them sincerely and tolerantly. Related to classroom management, teachers state that they use the lesson time efficiently in terms of communication with students. The teachers in the middle SES schools continue their communication with students together with effective listening within the framework of investigative individual characteristics. In the middle SES schools, it was observed that the inter-teacher communication and cooperation among branches were more frequent. Generally, it was found that there is an insufficient communication among school teachers. The teachers found their teaching experience enough. In the teacher-student relationships, a picture of communication appeared in which one-to-one communication was set up, the families were asked for support when necessary, empathy was established, and the students were cared. The teachers identified their students' material and moral needs by arranging meetings with student families. Activities held in the classroom play a role, too, in making Social Studies lessons more interesting through using the lesson time more carefully in pedagogical sense considering both classroom management and

communication in the lesson. Since students are active in these activities, no problems arise. It is observed that concepts such as empathy, sharing and sincerity are important in terms of the teacher-student communication. The students who are afraid of being mocked when they make a mistake are many in number at the low SES schools. Teachers who are patient, tolerant, teaching well and able to set up empathy with their students find the opportunity to develop better skills to communicate with their students. In their communication with students, teachers should apply the rules of establishing empathy and effective listening. The inter-teacher communication and cooperation should be developed among teachers in low SES schools. Through sharing, new methods can be more easily applied. It is important that students should set up face-to-face communication with their teachers both at and outside the school. In the question-answer parts of lessons, all students should be provided equal opportunity to give answers, the waiting duration following a question should be extended, and answers should be more explanatory so that the feedback received from the teacher should create a positive environment in communication with students.

In order for works and practices of strategies used by teachers directed to raising an information society individual to be healthy, their ways of setting up communication with their students and other teachers are important as well. If communication becomes evident among other teachers, it might increase the success at this matter. Determining the fact that changes and innovations are shared face-to-face, Cortazzi (1998) found out that cooperation appeared firstly in experienced teachers' lesson planning works; teachers reflected their experiences primarily to one another by following each other's teaching firstly and then sharing this. For social purposes, the teachers were determined to attend courses such as foreign language courses, courses on technical equipments, course tools development, learning environment arrangement, and modern education techniques. It can be thought that the acquisition of skills and values aimed in the Social Studies course play a role in the establishment of communication between teachers working in schools at high SES level and students within the borders of respect, honesty and needs. Social freedom shows itself in the form of the face-to-face communication at high SES. Generally, children think that they get on well with their teachers. With the passing years, they become more negative in evaluating their teachers (Dean 2000). Teachers whose communication skills are not good cannot express their emotions and thoughts and students cannot perceive what they are taught and messages given well. When students' needs of being listened to, understood, and trusted are met, a good communication atmosphere occurs (Kuzu 2003). Students' making mistakes, their not being able to meet their teachers' expectations mean seeing the disappointment. Because of this, teachers might exhibit bad behaviors at break-time or lunch-time (shouting, insulting, embarrassment, doing the homework again). Teachers encourage students by saying "do your best" and try to remove the risk of their being hurt personally (Pollard and Triggs 2000). Studies made put forward the fact that successful students set up good communication with their teachers (Elmacioglu 2000). It has gained importance that communication should be healthy in learning environment as well. The form of communication that students have with their teachers plays an important role in their being motivated to lessons or hating them. When positive feedback is received, the feeling of appreciation can be developed.

Referencesi

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