

THE EFFECTS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION COURSES ON THE ATTITUDES OF PRE-SERVICE PRIMARY MATHEMATICS TEACHERS TOWARDS MAINSTREAMING

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to analyze the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards mainstreaming before and after the informative studies about mainstreaming within the scope of special education courses carried out with primary mathematics pre-service teachers. The problem sentence of the study was determined as “What are the effects of informative studies regarding mainstreaming within the scope of special education courses carried out with primary mathematics pre-service teachers on the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards mainstreaming?” The design of ‘pretest-posttest with single group’ was used among quantitative data collection tools in the present research. This study was carried out with 38 pre-service teachers, 18 female and 20 male who are senior students in Marmara University, Educational Faculty, Teaching Primary School Mathematics Department in 2010-2011 academic years during fall semester. ‘Attitude Scale for Individuals who are affected by inabilities’ was used for the solution of the problems which was dealt with during the study. It was concluded that initially, people with disabilities were perceived as different from others by pre-service teachers, but then people with disabilities were not perceived as different from others by pre-service teachers. With this result, it is seen that the study which was carried out within the scope of special education course have a major role. It is concluded that the study increases the awareness level of students and change their point of views positively.

Key Words: Special education, mainstreaming, attitude.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, together with the importance provided for special education, the subject of mainstreaming “children who need special education” together with normally developing children started to gain importance. Formerly, while the idea that children who need special education should live in isolation from society and should receive a separate education was advocated, this idea was put aside later on and then the idea of teaching children who need special education to live in the society and to socialize with other children in the society took place instead of that idea. Garrison and Hamill stated in their research which was carried out in 1971 that there was no difference between isolating mentally disabled children from society and teaching them in special education classrooms which were prepared only for those children (Metin, 1972).

According to the law no.2916 for Children who need special education, children who need special education are specified as children who cannot benefit of normal education services in the age group between 4-18 because of their extra-ordinary differences in body, mind, sprit, social and health features and statues. The education provided for those children is defined as special education. According to the definition stated in the

law, special education is a teaching which is carried out in a suitable environment for the needs and disabilities of children with educational programs that are particularly prepared for those children and with teachers who are especially trained for the education of children who need special education (<http://www.ogretmenimiz.com/kanunlar/2916.htm>).

In our country, three types of teaching methods are used for children who need special education in primary. They are; mainstreaming, special education schools and special education classrooms (Sanioglu, Buyukkaragöz, Duman and Sari, 2008). Mainstreaming education is defined as integrating especially appropriate children who need special education with their educationally and socially normal peers under the responsibility of normal and special education personnel within the framework of individual educational programs (Balaban, Yilmaz and Yildizbaş, 2009).

The main objective of mainstreaming education is to provide social acceptance continually starting from childhood period for children who need special education and reintegrate them to the society (Metin, 1997). It is advocated that the friends of children with social disabilities are positive models in mainstreaming environments for those children so children acquire social behaviors and this also increase the probability of their acceptance by their friends (Merrel and Gimpel, 1998), in addition to that mainstreaming education help them to acquire many skills on the other fields other than social development (Balaban and others, 2009, Öncül and Batu, 2005).

Although the basic principles of mainstream practice is stated clearly at the codes, this model still cannot be implemented as it should be in our country; mainstreaming is generally accepted as only “placing those children into the classrooms where their peers exist” and the whole responsibility of the implementation is assigned to only class teachers. Yet, what is meant by mainstreaming is not only “placing students into regular classrooms” but also it is a complex and ongoing teaching and learning process with a philosophy behind (Sucuoğlu, 2006).

The basic problem for students who need special education is to adopt themselves to the society and being a productive person. However, for achieving this objective, the society should accept children who need special education and they need to show positive reactions towards them (Balaban and others, 2009 cited from Kayaoğlu, 1999). In this sense, most of the responsibility is on teachers in the education of children who need special education and in their adaptation to the society (Balaban and others, 2009 cited from Rizzo, 1985). The success of special education and the future practice depends on determining the attitudes of teachers towards mainstreaming education as primary and the most important factor. Because, the thesis of “the success of mainstreaming programs can be in danger with the attitudes of teachers” preserves its validity today (Sargin and Sünbül, 2002, cited from Atay, 1995).

A successful integration mostly depends on teachers’ positive reactions to their professions and their attitudes towards mainstreamed students (<http://erinlindsay.com/STOME1.rtf>, Sünbül and Sargin (2002), Parasuram, 2006). The attitudes of teachers not only determine the relationship between the teacher and mainstreamed student but also it has an important role in creating an expectancy for the success of mainstreamed students and in the attitudes of other students towards them (Horne, 1985). As the development of students with disabilities is getting better, the teaching will be more enjoyable for the teacher who sees the development of his/her student with disabilities better (Çelik and Eratay, 2007).

For a mainstreaming environment as well as the physical structure of the classroom and the school, number of students per classroom, curriculum, the skills and capacities of the personnel who will work, equipment and tools, the attitudes of the people who exist in this environment and how much they are ready to implement such a program should also be evaluated.

The positive attitudes towards students who need special education is extremely important in adopting the view that the individuals with inabilities should receive education together with their normal peers at the same

environment as much as possible and in the success of these kind of programs (Şenel, 1996, cited in Johnson and Johnson, 1984).

Training pre-service teachers about the teaching of mainstreamed students in regular classrooms takes an important part in teacher training programs. Reynold and Bitch (1977) state that teachers want to take training before they receive mainstreamed students in their classrooms and they also advocate that training pre-service teachers about this subject is a necessity (Cited in: Hoover & Cessna, 1984). Reed and Hill (1981) point out that the attitudes of pre-service teachers will change according to their experiences that they will have with mainstreamed students (cited in: Hoover&Cessna, 1984). It is stated that it is effective for regular classroom teachers to study with students who need special education as much as possible for gaining confidence since they feel insecure as they have difficulties in understanding the methods used by special education teachers (Hoover & Cessna, 1984, cited in, Clark, 1976; Harasymiw &Horne, 1976).

For the reasons stated above, developing positive attitudes towards children who need special education should be an important part of pre-service teachers' training. The teacher training which realizes insufficiencies and appropriate strategies for students with inabilities has a positive effect on success. It is probable to be unsuccessful for teachers who have negative attitudes towards children who need special education or who did not trained with appropriate strategies (Sze, 2009). The studies carried out about this subject within our country and abroad summarized below.

It is concluded that having mainstreaming courses or having mainstreamed students in the classroom cause positive changes and provide more positive point of views on the attitudes of teachers and pre-service teacher regarding mainstreaming (Orel, Zerey and Töret (2004); Gözün and Yıkmiş (2004); Alat and Alat (2007); Güven and Çevik (2011); Diken and Sucuoğlu (1999); McLeskey, Waldron So, Swanson and Loveland (2001); Akman and Okyay (2004); Elhoweris and Alsheikh (2006); Rakap and Kaczmarek (2010); Ünal (2010); Bilen (2007); Sze (2009); Stone and Brown (1986)).

There is not a significant statistical difference between the gender and attitudes of pre-service teachers who take special education courses towards mainstreaming (Alat and Alat (2007); Diken and Sucuoğlu (1999); Bek, Gülveren and Başer (2009); Şahbaz and Kalay (2010); Stone and Brown (1986), Rakap and Kaczmarek (2010), Akman and Okyay (2004), McLeskey, Waldron So, Swanson and Loveland (2001)). The situation is completely opposite in the studies of Güven and Çevik (2011).

When we consider the studies carried out about this subject, a study which examines the attitudes of primary mathematics pre-service teachers towards mainstreaming and the effect of special education course towards attitudes cannot be found. Generally, it can be found similar studies with departments such as classroom teachers and pre-school teachers but not too much. This study was carried out in order to fulfill such necessity.

The attitudes of teachers towards children who need special education is the basic subject of education and rehabilitation studies and it is defined as the unseen barriers of education (Balaban and others., 2009, cited in Altman, 1981). The problem sentence of the study was determined as "What are the effects of informative studies regarding mainstreaming within the scope of special education courses carried out with primary mathematics pre-service teachers on the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards mainstreaming?" by moving from the point of view that it is necessary to train pre-service teachers before teachers so that they can be ready for their professions about mainstreaming and in the first place to determine the attitudes and point of views of pre-service teachers towards mainstreaming and to increase their awareness about the subject.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards mainstreaming before and after the informative studies about mainstreaming within the scope of special education courses carried out with primary mathematics pre-service teachers.

According to this purpose the answers of the following questions are sought: Is there a significant difference between primary mathematics pre-service teachers' pre-test and post-test scores of Attitude Scale regarding

individuals who are effected by inabilities? Is there a significant difference between primary mathematics pre-service teachers' pre-test and post-test scores of Attitude Scale regarding individuals who are effected by inabilities by Gender?

The special education course added to curriculum in 2009-2010 academic years for the first time for different departments of educational faculties and this course is being taught to senior students of primary mathematics teaching department. Nowadays, mainstreaming applications in the field of special education is getting much more importance. Many studies were carried out about this subject. However, it is seen that there are not plenty of studies which provide solution strategies about what to do for making mainstreaming studies more effective and successful. This study is important in terms of informing pre-service teachers about mainstreaming within the scope of special education course carried out with primary mathematics pre-service teachers and determining the reflections of this course on the attitudes of pre-service teachers regarding the subject.

It is thought that the study is important since it was carried out with primary mathematics pre-service teachers in relation with special education course which is recently added to curriculum of primary mathematics teaching department and it is expected from the study to offer an insight to pre-service teachers for the future. The study which can be evaluated as an in-service teacher training to pre-service teachers can provide a guidance for preparing them to the future, a resource when they face with mainstreamed students, a change in their point of views by raising awareness, a guidance for them about finding something positive even from negative situations and something which does not let them to be insensitive. Teachers have great roles in successful mainstreaming practices. For this, teachers need to be informed about mainstreaming. Especially, teachers who started their professions with fully equipped about this subject are needed. This can be possible, when you make pre-service teachers ready for their professions by informing them about this subject.

It is thought that one of the researchers who participated to the study has a mainstreamed child and at the same time the researchers are working in the Primary Mathematics Teaching Department are important factors in terms of the study. With this, the study is important in terms of seeing the efforts, difficulties and troubles of someone who experienced closely things about mainstreaming subject and especially determining the things that can be done for mainstreamed students and it is thought that this study can make major contributions to the literature.

METHOD

In this part, the research model of the study is explained, the information about data collection instruments of the study, sample group participated to the study, data analysis techniques and the implementation process is provided.

The Research Model

In this study, it was aimed to analyze the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards mainstreaming before and after the informative studies about mainstreaming within the scope of special education courses carried out with primary mathematics pre-service teachers. With this purpose, the design of 'pretest-posttest with single group' was used among quantitative data collection tools. In this design, the effect of experimental procedure is tested with a study on a single group. The measurements regarding the dependent variable of experimental subjects are collected by using pre-test before the study, after as a post-test with the same subjects and by using the same testing instruments (Büyükoztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2011).

The Sample of The Study

This study was carried out with 38 pre-service teachers, 18 (47%) female and 20 (53%) male who are senior students in Marmara University, Educational Faculty, Teaching Primary School Mathematics Department in 2010-2011 academic years during fall semester.

Data Collection Instruments

'Attitude Scale for Individuals who are affected by inabilities' was used for the solution of the problems which was dealt with during the study. The attitude scale for the people who are affected by inabilities was developed by Yuker, Block and Young (1970). The form of the scale composed of 20 items was translated to Turkish by Özyürek (1988). The test-re-test reliability of this form was found as 0.76 and it was determined that its content validity was quite high. The high point from the scale means that people with disabilities are not perceived differently from people with no disabilities and the low point means that they are perceived differently (Girli, Yurdakul, Sarısoy and Özekes, 1999, cited in Yuker and others, 1970). It is stated that the scale can be used for searching both people with inabilities and without inabilities (Şenel, 1996). The purpose of the scale, without particularly discriminating disability groups, is to test the attitudes towards people who are affected by inabilities generally. The scale was prepared according to 6 point likert type as +3 Totally Agree, +2 Agree, +1 Slightly Agree, -1 Slightly Disagree, -2 Disagree, -3 Totally Disagree. The, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 11th and 12th items of the scale are scored in the opposite way. After all the items are summed by paying attention to their marks, the total score is found by adding +60 in order to remove negative values. The maximum score that one can get from scale is 120 (Sarı, Bektaş and Altıparmak, 2010). This scale is used for learning the attitudes of students towards individuals with disabilities. The scale was used as pre-test and post-test so that the effect of special education courses on students' attitudes towards disabled people was sought.

The Implementation Process

Research applications were carried out during 14 weeks in the fall semester of 2010-2011 academic years within the scope of special education course. Special education course is taught theoretically 2 hours in a week. 'Attitude Scale for Individuals who are affected by inabilities' was conducted as pre-test for students and same scale was conducted for the students as post-test at the end of the semester. Within scope of special education course, during the first 3 weeks (6 hours) researchers provided general information as a part of the course and later on students presented the subjects which were assigned to them by forming groups and finally submitted their reports. The students were asked to form groups with their friends as they wish and to name their groups. In this sense, 9 groups were created and the subjects were distributed. While distributing subjects, instead of student wishes, the subjects were distributed by drawing lots and the presentation days were decided according to the weeks.

While students were preparing their reports, they made observations, audio and video recordings, interviews with the institutions that they visited and document analysis about their subjects. It was paid attention for all groups that the content of their presentations were rich in this sense.

Each group was asked to visit schools and special education centers which were matched to their subjects and to express their observations from there. Besides, they were asked to observe disabled individuals according to their subjects, to get information from experts about this subject, to make video recordings, to prepare their presentations by collecting detailed information about their subjects and to submit a report at the end of the semester. Evaluations of the presentations were made depending on a certain criteria set by the researchers by following the presentations prepared by students.

The reason for asking students to search their subjects and to prepare presentations about them is to provide them to receive first hand information and from authorized people about children who have special needs, to observe these kinds of children on site, to breathe the same air by coming together with these children, to think about the education and situation of these children, to raise awareness, to be able to put themselves in their places. Besides, with the presentation of each group, it was aimed to get the opportunities such as increasing knowledge about special education, seeing the realities of life, feeling empathy with others, preparing himself or herself to the future as pre-service teacher, thinking about what to do when encountering with these children, thinking about how to give hope to these children and their families, seeing the mistakes and not repeating theme, being able to look at future with hope and seeing the light when there is no hope. In addition to that, one of the researchers shared his/her personal experiences about this subject with the classroom since he/she has a mainstreamed child during this process.

Data Analysis

In the study, first, the Attitude Scale for Individuals who are affected by inabilities' was conducted to the Primary school mathematics pre-service teachers. For the data analysis, statistical analysis method was used. While analyzing attitude scale data, dependent group t-test and one way variance analysis were used. The results were evaluated on (0.05) significance level.

RESULTS

Before analyzing the data obtained from the Attitude Scale for Individuals who are affected by inabilities, for making statistical analysis, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) test (as the number of data is more than 29) was conducted in order to determine whether the data showed normal distribution or not. According to this test results, it was obtained in pre-test ($p=.200$) and in post-test ($p=.200$). Since the significance value of both pre-test and post-test was bigger than 0.05, it was understood that the data obtained from both tests showed normal distribution and was suitable for statistical analysis.

Before analyzing the data obtained from the Attitude Scale for Individuals who are affected by inabilities by primary school mathematics pre-service teachers' gender, for making statistical analysis, Shapiro-Wilk test (as the number of data is less than 29) was conducted in order to determine whether the data had normal distribution or not. According to this test results, it was obtained in pre-test for females and males ($p=.486$, $p=.982$) and in post-test for females and males ($p=.612$, $p=.477$). Since the significance value of both pre-test and post-test was bigger than 0.05, it was understood that the data obtained from both tests showed normal distribution and was suitable for statistical analysis. Besides, ANOVA's basic assumption of homogeneity of variances requirement is provided for the pre-test ($\text{sig.} = 0.666 > 0.05$) and post-test ($\text{sig.} = 0.383 > 0.05$).

The analysis of the data obtained from the Attitude Scale for Individuals who are affected by inabilities is showed in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3.

In Table 1, there is dependent group t-test comparison regarding the pre-test and post-test scores of primary school mathematics pre-service teachers from the Attitude Scale for Individuals who are affected by inabilities.

Table 1: Dependent group t-test comparison regarding the pre-test and post-test scores of primary school mathematics pre-service teachers from the Attitude Scale for Individuals who are affected by inabilities.

Attitudes	N	Average	ss	sd	t	p
Pre-Attitude	38	63.148	9.498	39	2.203	0.033
Post-Attitude	38	65.893	7.783			

According to Table 1 ($t_{(39)} = 2.203$, $p=0.033 < 0.050$) there is a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of primary school mathematics pre-service teachers from the Attitude scale for individuals who are affected by inabilities. In order to determine the direction of this difference, it is necessary to look at the average scores of both tests. While the average score of the pre-test was 63.148, the average score of the post-test increased to 65.893. These values are in the direction of showing a significant increase between attitude scale scores of pre-service teachers. According to this result, initially, disabled people are perceived as different from people without disabilities by pre-service teachers, but later on it is seen that pre-service teachers do not see disabled people different from others. It is thought that informative studies carried out within the scope of special education courses and having a chance to observe disabled people closely by coming together with them have an important effect about this subject.

In Table 2, there are results of one way variance analysis for Attitude Scale pre-test scores of primary school mathematics pre-service teachers by gender.

Table 2: Results of one way analysis of variance for Attitude Scale pre-test scores of primary school mathematics pre-service teachers by gender

The Source of the Variance	Sum of Squares	sd	Average of Squares	F	p
Between Groups	189.120	1	189.120		
In Groups	3960.837	37	88.019	2.149	0.150
Total	4149.957	38			

According to Table 2, p significance value was found as 0.150, since this value is bigger than $\alpha=0.05$, there is not a significant difference between genders in terms of pre-attitude scores. According to this result, it is seen that both female and male primary school mathematics pre-service teachers have same point of views about individuals affected by inabilities before the implementation.

In Table 3, there are results of one way variance analysis for Attitude Scale post-test scores of primary school mathematics pre-service teachers by gender.

Table 3: Results of one way analysis of variance for Attitude Scale post-test scores of primary school mathematics pre-service teachers by gender

The Source of the Variance	Sum of Squares	sd	Average of Squares	F	p
Between Groups	42.554	1	42.554		
In Groups	2743.914	37	60.976	0.698	0.408
Total	2786.468	38			

According to Table 3, p significance value was found as 0.408, since this value is bigger than $\alpha=0.05$, there is not a significant difference between genders in terms of post-test scores. According to this result, it is seen that both female and male primary school mathematics pre-service teachers have same point of views about individuals affected by inabilities after the implementation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, it was aimed to analyze the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards mainstreaming before and after the informative studies about mainstreaming within the scope of special education courses carried out with primary mathematics pre-service teachers.

With this purpose, it was studied with senior students from primary school mathematics teachers department within the scope of special education course. It was planned for pre-service teachers to do research about the subjects within the scope of the course so that they would have information about the features and education of individuals who need special education by observing them. With the help of this, it was aimed for them to have information before starting teaching about the issues that they could experience in the future and to improve themselves according to these situations and to increase their information and experiences.

The following results were obtained within the scope of this research:

It was concluded that initially, people with disabilities were perceived as different from others by pre-service teachers, but then people with disabilities were not perceived as different from others by pre-service teachers. With this result, it is seen that the study which was carried out within the scope of special education course have a major role. It is concluded that the study increases the awareness level of students and change their point of views positively. The study with this aspect shows parallelism with the studies of Stone and Brown (1986), Diken and Sucuoğlu (1999), McLeskey, Waldron So, Swanson and Loveland (2001), Gözün and Yıkmiş (2004), Orel, Zerey and Töret (2004), Akman and Okyay (2004), Elhoweris and Alsheikh (2006), Alat and Alat (2007), Ünal (2010), Bilen (2007), Sze (2009), Rakap and Kaczmarek (2010), Güven and Çevik (2011).

There is no a difference between genders in terms of pre-attitude and post-attitude scores. The study with this aspect shows parallelism with the studies Stone and Brown (1986), Diken and Sucuoğlu (1999), McLeskey,

Waldron So, Swanson ve Loveland (2001), Akman and Okyay (2004), Alat and Alat (2007), Bek, Gülveren and Başer (2009), Şahbaz ve Kalay (2010), Rakap and Kaczmarek (2010). It does show any parallelism with the studies of Güven ve Çevik (2011).

The following suggestions can be made as a result of the study:

It is thought that carrying out a similar study with other subjects can contribute all graduates' professional life about mainstreaming education.

It is thought that having special education courses in both semesters instead of limiting this course into one term will help pre-service teachers to be more effective about mainstreaming.

It is thought that it is important to have subject teachers in special education courses in universities together with experts on this subject in terms of learning what can be done in mainstreaming education for other subjects.

It is thought that enriching pre-service trainings with in-service trainings about mainstreaming will be helpful for teachers.

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