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A Review of Research on Classroom Management in Turkey

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Abstract

This study aimed to review and critique classroom management research in Turkey, and present the emerging themes and findings of the selected studies on classroom management undertaken through 2002 to 2014. This paper reports on a content analysis of 46 classroom management research papers published in selected national and international journals and 8 peer-reviewed master/Phd thesis. Selection and then content analysis of the selected 54 studies in total were done in considering predetermined criteria. Firstly, the findings indicated that teachers’ ability to create this interactive classroom environment was influenced by some variables such as teacher beliefs and teachers’ expectations of the students. Second, it demonstrated the complex nature of classroom management as it was investigated through a rich set of variables in the study. Third, it provided implications for teachers and teacher trainers on classroom management. Finally this study outlines the critical areas of research on classroom management and identifies areas of further research.

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Keywords: Classroom management, content analysis, Turkey

1. Introduction

Classroom environment is a complex atmosphere in which students and teachers are continuously communicating through discussing, talking, writing and even using gestures like raising and shaking hand (Martin, 2002). Physical (e.g., designing of the room) and psychological structure of the classroom have a great impact on teacher and student behaviours and interactions within the classroom. When this interaction is supposed to be an important element for teaching and learning process, the teachers are observed to be an important factor for effective management (Savran & Çakiroğlu, 2004), act as a participant in teaching and learning and have ability to influence lots of environmental qualities in the classroom such as socialization, social interaction and personalization (Martin, 2002). Good classroom organization and management appears to be a basic condition for establishing an effective

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teaching and learning environment (Brophy, 1983; Emmer, Evertson & Worsham, 2000; Evertson, Emmer, Sanford & Clements, 1993).

Classroom management is an umbrella term that covers the teacher’s actions to establish a learning environment which supports the development of children’s academic and social-emotional skills (Evertson and Weinstein, 2006). It is combination of rules, words and many actions that a teacher apply to keep the classroom ‘running smoothly’ so that teaching and learning can work efficiently (Groves, 2009). So, classroom management comprises the organization of the physical environment of the classroom, management of planning and programming activities, management of relations and communication in the classroom and management of children’s behavior (Martin & Sass, 2010). Classroom management is a process to enhance students’ involvement and cooperation in classroom discussion and activities (Roelofs & Veenman, 1994). This process is influenced by teachers’ approaches as a function of teachers’ beliefs about the behaviours of the students (Martin & Baldwin, 1992). This was supported with the findings of the study done by Savran and Cakiroglu (2004) indicating that pre-service science teachers tended to adopt an orientation toward strong control over the students for instructional management. Similar findings were observed in the study of Duman, Gelisli and Cetin (2004) with teachers aiming to evaluate teachers’ approaches to establish discipline in the classroom. In addition to teachers’ beliefs, socio-economic background of students (Telli, den Brok, & Çakiroğlu, 2006) and teachers’ expectations from the students create a variance in teachers’ instructional and classroom management behaviours (Öztürk, Gürçü and Tezel, 2003). There are some other factors influencing teachers’ classroom management such as teacher background (Şimşek & Çakiroğlu, 2006) and teacher attitudes (Güven & Akdağ, 2002). Shortly, the basic aim of classroom management is to create an atmosphere in classroom where meaningful learning occurs (Bakioğlu, 2009).

Both the definitions of classroom management and the studies that prove the crucial role of an effective management for successful learning environments direct us the conclusion that researches in educational settings have to enrich our literature in the classroom management area.

1.1. The purpose of the study

In the Turkish literature, there are several researches that address the various aspects of the classroom management and the factors associated with teachers’ classroom management abilities. Determining these factors and how they shape teachers’ classroom management behaviors will help the researchers to design their further research on this topic and also the teachers understand to establish link between these factors and their classroom management tendencies. In this regard, this study analyze all classroom management research undertaken with Turkish sample in 2002-2014 in selected peer-review journals and master/Phd thesis to present the trends of in the field of CM research. Thus, this study aims to review and critique classroom management research in Turkey and present the emerging themes and findings of the related research studies.

2. Method

Content analysis, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the analysis of papers based on some criteria by using different research/search engines. Content analysis is an organized interpretation of similar concepts and themes that make readers understand better by bringing these data together (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006). In other words, Bilgin (2006) describes it as a research technique providing a methodic, systematic, objective and –if possible- quantitative analysis in order to classify and interpret the main elements of various texts which do not reveal the meaning at a first glance.

2.1. Criteria used for choosing researches

Five criteria were taken into account for searching and including the research studies in this review:

(1) Studies mainly focusing on classroom management research
(2) Studies including Turkish sample
(3) Studies with empirical evidences (No discussion or theoretical work was included.)
(4) Studies conducted between the dates of 2002 and 2014
(5) Studies published in selected peer-reviewed journals and master or PhD thesis
2.2. Process of the Content Analysis

Research studies which satisfied the above criteria were accessed through the national and international databases and personal communication with the authors for unreachable ones. The research papers were drawn from refereed academic journals published in Turkey (n=27) and also from selected international journals (n=4). Master (n=6) and PhD thesis (n= 2) were accessed using national thesis center of Higher Education Council (YOK).

More than 60 studies were accessed, but only 54 of them were found to be in line with the criteria above. Five tables were created in order to comparatively review the studies in terms of mostly used research/design methods, samples, data collection tools, data analysis methods/techniques and themes through content analysis. During the content analysis process the authors worked together in order to achieve a reliable classification of the studies. The studies were classified by collaborative work between the authors and disagreements were resolved with the leadership by the first author.

3. Results

3.1. Method of the Selected Studies

Regarding the mostly used research design of the studies, a majority employed quantitative survey research designs (n = 38). The other research methods used in the selected studies were qualitative case studies (n = 11) and mixed methods case studies (n = 5). In terms of samples and the sample sizes, the results indicated that majority of the samples involved in the studies were teachers (n= 40), undergraduate students (n= 17). The other samples involved in the studies were supervisors (n= 4) and parents (n= 1). The sample size ranged from 301 to 1000 individuals. As for data collection tools, likert-type questionnaires (n=22) and some type of scales (n=16) were utilized often as quantitative approach methods, while observation forms (n= 11) interviews (n=7) were utilized often as data collection tools in qualitative and mixed approach methods. Regarding data analysis, SPSS (n = 20), or another statistical software program was used in most of the quantitative studies. Among the types frequently used were descriptive analysis, and presentation methods such as charts, frequencies, and percentage tables (n=16). Inferential statistical analysis methods such as t-test (n=21), ANOVA (n=11) and MANOVA (n=2) analysis were also used by researchers. In some of the qualitative studies, content analysis (n=2) and descriptive analysis (n=3) were used, the data analysis process was not clearly identified in 10 studies.

3.2. Frequently Investigated Themes

The studies on classroom management research in Turkey in national and international journals were focused widely on teacher profile and behaviors, teacher efficiency, classroom discipline problems and classroom management strategies.

The result pointed out that there are four main areas that dominates all studies. These studies are; focusing on teacher profile and behaviors (n=22, 40,7%), teachers’ efficiency (n=13, 24%), classroom discipline problems (n=11, 20,3%) and classroom management strategies (n=8, %14,8).

4. Conclusion and Discussion

In this analysis 54 classroom management research studies covering the 2002–2014 time period were investigated by using aforementioned five criteria.

Regarding the research methods, it was found out that quantitative studies (n=38) predominated within classroom management research in Turkey. This was followed with qualitative methods (n=11) and mixed methods (n=5). When the quantitative studies were investigated in detail, it was evident that the majority employed descriptive and survey research methods. The results of this study show parallelism with the other content analysis studies carried out in Turkey (Erdoğan et al., 2009; Sözbilir, Kutu, Yaşar, 2012; Ulutaş & Ubuz, 2008).
In terms of samples and the sample sizes, the results indicated that majority of the samples involved in the studies were teachers and undergraduate students and the sample size ranged from 31 to 300 individuals. Similar findings were also observed in the study of Göktaş, Küçük et al. (2012).

According to the data collection tools, the results showed that data were more frequently collected with questionnaires and scales and most of the quantitative studies relied only on one data collection tool at the end of this study. This result was also apparent in Kurtoglu and Seferoglu (2011).

Regarding the data analysis methods, it was determined that frequencies/percentages tables and central tendency measures are commonly used as data analysis method and also parametric tests such as t test and ANOVA are used in inferential analysis. However, researchers rarely use advanced statistical techniques such as MANOVA/MANCOVA, factor analysis, regression analysis in the studies as stated by Erdem (2011).

4.1. Frequently investigated themes

This analysis indicated that teachers had tendency for their studies on teacher profile and behaviors, teachers' efficiency, the discipline problems occurred in classroom and classroom management strategies. In most of the studies, teachers generally preferred to use authoritative types of teacher profile (Ekici, 2004), to adopt intervenist approach (Duman, Gelsli & Cetin, 2004) and to ensure the discipline in the classroom through reward and punishment strategies. Further, Şimşek and Çakiroğlu (2006) found that students perceived their teachers as helper/friend and understanding, and sometimes as strict/disciplined. Furthermore, as indicated by Telli, den Brok, & Çakiroğlu, (2006), students’ school report grades, gender and grade level were related to their perceptions of inter-personal teacher profiles of their teachers. The reasons of teachers’ preference for dominative types of management profiles were because of professional seniority, socioeconomic condition of the schools they worked at and numbers of the students in the classroom (Ekici, 2004). These studies pointed out that teachers smiled more, showed more confidence and assigned more challenging tasks to those for whom they had high expectations, and these students were mostly successful and came from better economical conditions. On the other hand, teachers responded negatively to the ones for whom they had expectations, and these students were mostly poor, unsuccessful and misbehaving students. Similarly, Sahin, Öztürk, and Koç (2002) reported that the teachers responded to students from whom they had high expectations with more affection and established better communication. So, the classroom management behaviors and styles of the teachers in their classes affect the students’ skill learning both positively and negatively.

There were studies that investigated teachers’ efficiency within student-centered or constructivist teaching and learning processes. In the study of Ercoskun (2011), the more the number of students the less teacher efficacy is seen in the sub-dimension of classroom management in terms of “effectiveness”. In the study of Teyfur’s (2011), the effect of constructivist learning approach have caused some results such as the increase in the need of the teachers’ using new techniques and methods, increasing importance of teachers’ using effectively the technique of asking questions, the increase in teachers’ guidance roles, the necessity in making the lessons funnier, the necessity in teachers’ using the reinforcement, feedback and revision effectively and teachers’ forming the strategies of motivation. In relation to communication skills of teachers, Dağlı and Öner (2002) found that teachers communicated well with the students in the classroom and responded positively to the students’ expectations and needs.

With regard to classroom management strategies, teachers’ most distinguished roles in the classroom were detected as discovering students’ previous learning and experiences and then integrating those into instruction. According to Teyfur (2011), in the classes where constructivist approach is applied the teacher is in the position of guiding and helping the student in the learning process.

Regarding classroom discipline problems, this study showed that there were significant differences in misbehaviors in terms of the gender of the teachers, their experience, and their coping strategies. The study carried out with 293 7th and 8th grade students revealed that teachers tended to determine rules at the very beginning of the class year, got very angry when the students misbehaved during the instruction and motivated the students to get their attention to instruction (Güven & Akdağ, 2002). High number of the students in classroom and relatively low number of the technological equipments also created problems in terms of effective management and effective usage of the materials (Altun, 2007). As stated by Erdoğan, Kurşun, Şişman, Saltan, Gök & Yıldız (2010), in light of the
data obtained from the participants, the possible problems of teachers associated with classroom management were (1) lack of motivation, (2) rule and routines breaking, (3) lack of infrastructure, (4) ineffective time management, (5) classroom environment, and (6) lack of classroom interaction. The complexity of classroom relations necessitate their regulation through rules (Brophy, 1983). Establishing rules that students comprehend and participate would contribute to students’ relations with both to the teacher and among each other (Kayıkçı, 2009).

5. Suggestions

Based on the results of this research those suggestions are developed:
1. School and classroom management strategies should be developed accordance with to constructivist approach.
2. Classroom management should be considered as a powerful cluster of techniques and strategies in terms of creating meaningful learning experiences for all students including students with disabilities.
3. There is need for more research focusing on knowledge and skills of teachers in terms of managing their classrooms effectively and modifying instruction that could enhance learning opportunities for all students.
4. The fields that teachers encounter problems should be determined by means of determining need techniques and teachers should be trained in these fields in order to form constructivist classroom management.
5. Advanced statistical methods that would help investigate the relationship and correlation among the variables, and qualitative techniques that would provide in-depth insight and understanding should be planned and conducted for further research.

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