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SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS' AND TEACHER CANDIDATES' PERCEPTIONS ON PROMPT FEEDBACK AND COMMUNICATE HIGH EXPECTATIONS

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate perception of social studies teachers and teacher candidates on the implication of two of the seven principles of good practice in education developed by Chickering and Gamson (1987) at middle school social studies classrooms. To this extend a survey instrument was used to collect data and address the research questions. The total internal reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as 0.68. The sample of the study consists of 31 Social Studies teachers, 50 second grade and 49 fourth grade Social Studies teacher candidates.

The result of the study shows that for principle 4 (prompt feedback) second and fourth grade teacher candidates have more affirmative statements than the teachers, while for principle 6 (communicate high expectations) social studies teachers have more positive statements than 2nd and 4th grade students.

Keywords

Social Studies Teachers, Prospective Teachers, Prompt Feedback, Communicate High Expectations, Seven Principles of Good Practice

1. Introduction

For years, educators have been trying to establish good practice standards of education in order to create active learning environments for the students and improve quality of the education. One important step towards standard development came from Chickering and Gamson in 1999. According to Chickering and Gamson in order to solve current problems of education such as declining student performance, interest, motivation and inadequate teaching strategies (Martyn, 2004; Batts, 2008, Taylor, 2002; Chickering & Gamson, 1991; Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996; Arbaugh & Hornik, 2006) schools must encourage active learning, teacher-student-school contact, and cooperation among students, give prompt feedback, emphasize time-on-task, communicate high expectations, and respect diverse talents and ways of learning (Gamson, 1991; Bangert, 2004). These principles provide a good learning environment and intend to establish the standards of education to improve the quality of a particular face-to-face teaching (Chickering and Gamson, 1999).

Focus of education at all levels is shifting from teaching to learning. New educational approach considers teaching as a process, which involves helping learners to create knowledge through interactive and authentic learning experiences (Aydogdu, Doymus, and Simsek, 2012). Basic characteristics of constructivist learning environments include active learning, authentic instructional tasks, cooperation between students, and diverse and multiple learning formats (Partlow & Gibbs, 2003). In this case, a polyphonic learning environment is needed in which responsibility is shared both by student and by teacher. Seven Principles of Good Practice in can help creating such educational environment.

The Seven Principles of Good Practice have been implemented and studied by many innovative educational experts (Taylor, 2002; Graham, Lim, Craner, Cagiltay, & Duffy, 2000).

For example, Braxton, Olsen, and Simmons (1998) found that these principles could be successfully implemented in low paradigmatic disciplines such as history, psychology, and sociology, whereas disciplines such as biology, chemistry, and physics are less likely to utilize them. A research team at Indiana University found that the seven principles can be applied to both face-to-face and online courses (Graham et al., 2000). Bradford and Peck (1997), claims that with Seven Principles educational intuitions can achieve higher educational outcomes since these principles shift the instructors' focus to incorporate active learning which encourages students to perform better. In a recent study Bali (2014) evaluated the effectiveness of massive open online courses (MOOCs) using the Seven Principles of Good Practice. The research shows that they are not "all offered in exactly the same way, and some provide more sound pedagogy that develops higher order thinking, whereas others do not" (Bali, 2014).

1.1 Prompt Feedback

Prompt feedback can be defined as knowing whether the target outcomes are realized or not. In education, prompt feedback can be described as knowing what you know and what you do not related to learning. Feedback is an important action that improves learning (Voerman, Meijer, Korthagen and Simons, 2012) and enhance both students' skills and motivation (Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Bruning & Horn 2000). For efficient adaptations in any course, students must receive the relevant feedback on what they are learning and how to evaluate themselves (Duijnhouwer, Prins, & Stokking, 2012). Effective feedback is quite necessary for motivation, empowerment, retention and the development of self-critical learning skills (Nicol, 2008; Race, 2009; Yorke & Longden, 2008).

Prompt feedback could strengthen the active mutual effect between the teacher and student, which positively affects student learning (Dennen, Darabi & Smith, 2007; Burnett, 2002; Chang, 2011; Young & Norgard, 2006). Prompt feedback is regarded as a motivating strategy for testing the opportunity to assess the actual performance of students according to certain criteria. Moreover, it provides informing students, parents and administrators regarding students' progress. Students need the awareness that they provide feedback to correct their mistakes (Oche, 2012). Prompt feedback could facilitate the interplay between the preceptors and the students as well as the transmission and swop of information between these (Beard, 2008).

1.2 Communicate High Expectations

High expectation is also a critical factor associated with student success (O'Malley & Amarillas, 2011). As the saying goes "expect more and you will get more." Clear expectations and regulations are seen as major elements in school success (McVay, Murphy, & Yoon, 2008; Weinstein, Soule, Collins, Cone, Mehlorn, & Stimmonacchi, 1991). Research shows there is positive correlation between high expectations and student success. However, support is an important part in this equation; therefore, high expectations should be combined with high levels of teacher tenderness and support (Shouse, 1996). Also, expectations should vary according to students' skill levels, teacher assistance and attention needs (Conceicao, 2007).

Equal treatment might be unjust if the receivers are not equal in many senses. On the other hand, teachers' differential behaviors towards students turns out more appropriate and productive in many situations (Spitek, 2006). Due to their lack of skills and motivation, some students need to be provided with more advanced materials or more amount of kindness, assistance, and attention by the teachers (Conceicao, 2007). However, most teachers fails to provide proper environment to address individual student skills and needs (Spitek, 2006; Wilson, 2004; Kohl, 1994; Mehan, Hubbard, & Villanueva, 1994; Tavani & Losh, 2003; Scott & Tobe, 1995).

In a successful learning environment, it is necessary to equip the students with reachable high-level expectations and provide prompt feedback to help them reach those goals. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate Social Studies teachers' and teacher candidates' perceptions towards "prompt feedback" and "communicate high expectations" as part of good practices in education developed by Chickering and Gamson (1987). The study also aims to investigate whether participants' perceptions on prompt feedback and communicate high expectations differ based on grade, experience or gender.

2. Method

To address the research question, participants were asked to complete a 20-item scale, which aims to measure the extent that if they apply or would apply two of the Seven Principles of Good Practice in their middle school social studies courses. Scores between prospect and active social studies teachers were compared to determine if there is a difference in participants' perceptions based on grade, experience or gender.

2.1 Participants

In this study, 31 Social Studies teachers working in city of Erzurum and 99 teacher candidates (50 second grade and 49 fourth grade) studying Social Studies at Ataturk University, Faculty of Education were asked to respond to the scale on a voluntary basis.

2.2 Data Collection Instruments

In this study, 20-item scale, which developed by Chickering and Gamson (1987) and translated into Turkish by Aydogdu, Doymus and Simsek (2012), was administered after receiving required permissions. The original and translated instrument consisted of 70 questions in total, with seven sections representing the seven principles, and with ten items in each section. Aydogdu, Doymus and Simsek (2012) calculated the total internal reliability coefficient for the Turkish version of the scale as 0.68. In this study, the principles of ‘Prompt Feedback’ and ‘Communicate High Expectations’ were investigated. Items of principles are given as an appendix.

2.3 Data Analysis

Teachers’ and teacher candidates’ responses were compared and tested for statistical mean difference in order to determine if participants’ perceptions varies based on grade, experience or gender by using Pearson’s t-test or analysis of variance (ANOVA), where appropriate.

3. Findings

In this part of the study, the data obtained from the scale administrated to social studies teachers and teacher candidates related to prompt feedback and communicate high expectations measuring similar characteristics were given in Table-1 and Table-2 respectively.

3.1 Participants’ Perceptions on Prompt Feedback

Table 1: *Participants’ perceptions on prompt feedback (descriptive statistics, ANOVA for the group comparison and independent t-test for gender comparison)*

Principle: 4	Grade 2 (N= 50)		Grade 4 (N=49)		Teachers (N=31)		ANOVA		Independent t-test	
	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>

Item 1	3,60	1,010	3,33	1,088	3,71	1,039	1,4791	0,229	1,553	0,400
Item 2	3,94	0,843	3,96	0,815	3,74	0,893	0,719	0,489	1,841	0,369
Item 3	3,71	0,898	3,76	0,723	3,87	1,118	0,315	0,730	-0,621	0,322
Item 4	4,46	0,734	4,29	0,890	4,29	0,938	0,641	0,529	-0,663	0,566
Item 5	4,06	0,843	4,00	0,866	3,74	1,125	1,198	0,305	1,012	0,157
Item 6	4,28	0,757	4,18	0,755	3,87	0,885	2,665	0,073	-0,073	0,952
Item 7	3,55	1,119	3,63	1,131	3,06	1,315	2,439	0,091	0,741	0,715
Item 8	4,08	1,085	3,65	1,011	3,45	1,261	3,543	0,032	-0,289	0,460
Item 9	3,35	1,284	3,00	1,238	3,39	1,358	1,203	0,304	0,012	0,998
Item10	4,14	1,050	4,00	1,021	3,42	1,285	4,342	0,015	-0,184	0,453

As shown in Table 1, according to the results of variance analysis (One-way ANOVA) no statistically significant difference was observed for item 1 ($F(2-127) = 1,491$; $p > 0,05$), item 2 ($F(2-127) = 0,719$; $p > 0,05$), item 3 ($F(2-125) = 0,315$; $p > 0,05$), item 4 ($F(2-127) = 0,641$; $p > 0,05$), item 5 ($F(2-127) = 1,198$; $p > 0,05$), item 6 ($F(2-127) = 2,665$; $p > 0,05$), item 7 ($F(2-126) = 2,439$; $p > 0,05$)) and item 9 ($F(2-125) = 1,203$; $p > 0,05$), based on grade and experience. On the other hand, significant differences between the groups were detected for item 8 ($F(2-127) = 3,543$; $p < 0,05$) and item 10 ($F(2-127) = 4,342$; $p < 0,05$). According to LSD (Least Significant Different) test, one of multiple comparison (Post-Hoc) tests used to determine within which groups and in which way the significant difference occurs. According to LSD test, there were significant differences between participants' responses for "asking students to keep logs or records of their progress" (item-8), and "calling or writing a note to students who miss class" (item-10). More second grade students stated that they would ask students to keep logs or records of their progress very often than fourth grade students and active teachers. Which shows participants' willingness to help students record their own success and improvements is decreasing based on grade and experience. For item-10, teacher candidates reported more positive perceptions than active teachers related to communicating the parents of absent students and making the students attend the classes. Again, participants' willingness to communicate with the parents of absent students is decreasing based on grade and experience.

Participants' perceptions on prompt feedback is not changing based on gender. According to the results of the independent t-test for the variable of gender, no significant difference was observed for any of the items.

3.2 Participants' Perceptions on Communicate High Expectations

Table 2: Participants' perceptions on communicate high expectations (descriptive statistics, ANOVA for the group comparison and independent t-test for gender comparison)

Principle: 6	Grade 2 (N= 50)		Grade 4 (N=49)		Teachers (N=31)		ANOVA		Independent t-test	
	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Item 1	3,96	0,807	3,92	0,954	4,39	0,761	3,262	0,042	-0,940	0,100
Item 2	4,20	0,881	3,94	0,922	3,97	1,080	1,082	0,342	-0,490	0,620
Item 3	3,72	1,089	4,00	0,913	3,84	0,969	0,980	0,378	0,058	0,994
Item 4	4,42	0,673	4,29	0,736	3,87	1,088	4,511	0,013	-0,548	0,969
Item 5	4,30	0,763	4,08	0,909	4,26	0,893	0,885	0,415	0,240	0,197
Item 6	4,08	0,922	4,08	1,096	3,61	1,022	2,511	0,085	0,818	0,829
Item 7	3,84	1,028	3,82	1,034	3,42	0,923	1,933	0,149	1,086	0,989
Item 8	3,48	1,282	3,45	1,042	4,00	0,931	2,718	0,070	1,911	0,409
Item 9	4,30	0,735	4,31	0,822	4,00	0,966	1,585	0,209	1,463	0,341
Item10	4,36	0,776	4,33	0,826	3,90	1,076	3,013	0,053	2,310	0,036

According to analysis of variance (ANOVA) no statistically significant results were observed for item 2 ($F(2-127) = 1,082$; $p > 0,05$), item 3 ($F(2-127) = 0,980$; $p > 0,05$), item 5 ($F(2-127) = 0,885$; $p > 0,05$), item 6 ($F(2-127) = 2,511$; $p > 0,05$), item 7 ($F(2-126) = 1,933$; $p > 0,05$), item 8 ($F(2-127) = 2,718$; $p > 0,05$), item 9 ($F(2-127) = 1,585$; $p > 0,05$) and item 10 ($F(2-127) = 3,013$; $p > 0,05$) (Table 2). On the other hand, for item-1 (I tell students that I expect hard work) ($F(2-127) = 3,262$; $p < 0,05$) and item 4 (I help students set challenging goals for learning) ($F(2-127) = 4,511$; $p < 0,05$) significant differences were determined. LSD (Least Significant Different), one of multiple comparison (Post-Hoc) tests used to determine within which groups and in which way the significant difference occurs was utilized. According to LSD test: there were significant differences between both second grades and teachers, and fourth grades and teachers' perceptions on "telling students that I expect hard work" (item 1). Active teachers

stated that they expect harder work from the students and inform them about this very often than the second and fourth grade students. And for item-4 (helping students to set challenging goals for learning), the mean difference was determined both for second grades and teachers and fourth grades and teachers. The teachers were observed to have more tendencies to help the students set goals for their learning than second and fourth grade students.

According to the results of the independent t-test for the variable of gender applied to 10 items of communicate high expectations scale no statistical significance have been determined for 9 of the 10 items. Only for item-10 (I periodically discuss how well we are doing) female participants ($\bar{x}=2,60$) stated that they more often discuss with students on how well they are doing than males ($\bar{x}=2,22$) and this result is statistically significant ($p>0,05$).

4. Discussions and Conclusion

For the most of the statements, prospective and active teachers gave quite similar answers. This can be interpreted as teacher-training programs are quite successful at teaching contemporary and democratic principles of teaching and learning, and helping teacher candidates gaining real life experiences. When it comes to Prompt Feedback (principle-4), only on 2 out of 10 items participants' responses were different. On the issue of "asking the students to record their own success and improvements" (item-8) and "contacting with the parents of absent students to make them attend the classes", (item-10) teacher candidates gave more positive responses than active teachers did. This can be interpreted as teacher candidates are educated through a program adopting a constructivist approach and a perfectionist understanding of teaching and learning. With respect to the gender variable, no significant difference was found between female and male participants' perceptions on prompt feedback (Table 1).

When it comes to Communicate High Expectations (principle-6), only on 3 out of 10 items participants' responses were different. For item-1 under this principle, active teachers seems to be more inclined on "setting high standards" for their students than prospect teachers. As stated before if backed up with high support, high expectations can help increasing student success. Teacher candidates' reluctance on setting high standards for their students, shows that they are still in the student mode therefore they see no gain forcing students to work harder. Also active teachers were observed to have more tendencies to help the students set goals for their learning than teacher candidates. Setting positive goals is the key element of success. Nowadays

many schools are introducing concepts like SMART goals as a way increasing students' capacity to overcome daily and educational challenges they are facing (Roxanne (2005). Teacher candidates' responses on "setting high standards" and "helping students to set goals" shows their lack of comprehension on the importance of these principles for students' extrinsic motivation, and academic achievement.

With regard to the gender variable, it was found that female teachers and teacher candidates have more positive statements than males regarding regularly exchanging views with students on how to be more successful in the courses. Hence, it can be concluded that female prospective and teachers are more sensitive to care about their students. These results are also parallel with the study of Bishoff (2010).

In this study, Social Studies teachers' and teacher candidates' perceptions related applying principles prompt feedback and communicate high expectations developed by Chickering and Gamson (1987) in social studies classes have been evaluated. With the aim of establishing a better learning environment and helping students to participate more actively into this environment, it is essential that these principles are efficiently practiced in education environment and adopted by the teachers. Henceforth, it will be beneficial to conduct applied studies in primary and secondary education social studies courses.

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APPENDIX

Principle 4: Prompt Feedback
Item 1. I give quizzes and homework assignments.
Item 2. I prepare classroom exercises and problems which give students immediate feedback on how well they do.
Item 3. I return examinations and papers within a week.
Item 4. I give students detailed evaluations of their work early in the term.
Item 5. I ask my students to schedule conferences with me to discuss their progress.
Item 6. I give my students written comments on their strengths and weaknesses on exams and papers
Item 7. I give my students a pre-test at the beginning of each course.
Item 8. I ask students to keep logs or records of their progress.
Item 9. I discuss the results of the final examination with my students at the end of the semester.
Item 10. I call or write a note to students who miss class.

Principle 6: Communicates High Expectations
Item 1. I tell students that I expect hard work.
Item 2. I emphasize the importance of holding high standards.
Item 3. I make clear my expectations orally and in writing for each course.
Item 4. I help students set challenging goals for learning
Item 5. I explain to students what will happen if they do not complete their work on time
Item 6. I suggest extra reading or writing.
Item 7. I encourage students to write a lot.
Item 8. I publicly call attention to excellent performance.
Item 9. I revise my courses.
Item 10. I periodically discuss how well we are doing.