

INVESTIGATING PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS

ABSTRACT

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This study aimed to investigate physical education (PE) teachers' communication skills. Universe of the study was composed of PE teachers employed in Manisa Province centre secondary and high schools during 2012-2013 academic year. Contacts were made with all PE teachers in Manisa and 203 surveys returned by the responders were included in the study. "Teachers' Communication Skills Scale" developed by Çetinkanat (1997) was used in the study to measure teachers' perceptions related to communication skills. SPSS 16 program was used for data analysis which included percentages, frequencies and correlation analyses. Level of statistical significance was assigned as .05. Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated to be 0.61. Results presented that PE teachers had high level of communication skills. Significant relationships were identified among empathy, transparency, equality, efficacy and efficiency sub dimensions.

Keywords: Physical Education, Sports, Communication, Secondary Education, Physical Education Teacher

BEDEN EĞİTİMİ ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN İLETİŞİM BECERİLERİNİN İNCELENMESİ

ÖZET

Bu araştırmanın amacı, beden eğitimi ve spor öğretmenlerinin iletişim becerilerini incelemektir. Araştırmanın evrenini 2012-2013 eğitim öğretim yılında Manisa merkezde ortaöğretim ve lisede görev yapan beden eğitimi öğretmenleri oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada okullarda görev yapan tüm öğretmenlere ulaşılmaya çalışılmış, geri dönen ölçeklerden 203'ü değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırmada, öğretmenlerin iletişim becerilerine ilişkin algıları ölçmek için Çetinkanat'ın (1997) geliştirdiği "Öğretmen İletişim Becerileri Ölçeği" kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde SPSS 16 programı kullanılmıştır. Veri analizinde yüzde ve frekans ve korelasyon analizleri yapılmıştır. 0.05 anlamlılık düzeyi temel alınmıştır. Ölçeğin iç tutarlılığı için hesaplanan Cronbach alpha değeri: 0,61'dir. Araştırmada beden eğitimi ve spor öğretmenlerinin iletişim becerisi yüksek bulunmuştur. Empati, saydamlık, eşitlik, etkililik ve yeterlilik alt boyutları arasında anlamlı ilişkiler saptanmıştır. Sonuçta beden eğitimi ve spor öğretmenlerinin iletişim becerilerinin yüksek olduğu saptanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Beden Eğitimi, Spor, İletişim, Ortaöğretim, Beden Eğitimi öğretmeni

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INTRODUCTION

Human beings are involved in communications network anywhere and anytime throughout their lives. They need to communicate in order to express themselves, to understand and explain things.

According to Açıkgöz (2003), “communication takes place between two or more people based on common understandings”. Considered from the perspective of learning-teaching period, main function of communication is to cause behaviour change by sharing emotions, thoughts, knowledge and skills in addition to make common sense of meanings. In another definition, communication is the sharing of mutual messages between two units; i.e. the process of knowledge production which is used to make sense (Dökmen 1999). According to Miller “it is message transmittal from a source to the receiver in order to have a purposeful influence on behaviours” (Cited in Ergin and Birol, 2000). Through communication, people have the opportunity to reveal the ideas and concepts in their minds, to share and assess them. Influencing people, making benefits, being useful and having success are possible through communication.

Education is a communication process as well, therefore it is impossible to educate without using communication (Küçükahmet, 2000). Preparing individuals for the new century can only be achieved through education opportunities provided for them and with the help of healthy communication skills that will be developed. It can be stated that it is only possible to reach the level

of contemporary societies today through emphasizing and focusing on the importance of communication as well as education.

All education activities aim to have students acquire new behaviours and establish the desired changes in their behaviours. This aim is achieved at schools through teachers. In order to achieve this aim, teachers share their ideas, knowledge, attitudes, feelings and skills with their students. This process of sharing is called communication. Thus, it is clear that learning cannot be separated from communication and a quality education is the harvest of a quality communication (Karatekin et. al., 2012).

For a successful and healthy communication, communication skills should include effective listening, being able to use others’ perspectives, empathy, sensitivity to verbal and nonverbal messages and expressing oneself (Rutherford, Mathur and Quinn 1998, p. 357).

Teachers with effective communication skills can reflect their teaching personas to the highest degree by making effective impressions on them through building positive relationships with their students. Almost all studies in the field show significant correlations between teacher effectiveness and student success and satisfaction (Şen and Erişen, 2002).

Teachers shouldn’t only regard themselves as transmitters of knowledge in class but also be aware that they need to present desired

communication skills as well. It should be kept in mind that communication skills possessed and adopted by teachers are effective in teaching quality, classroom management and in arousing student interest attention (Karagöz and Kösterelioğlu 2008).

“Having good communication skills will ensure healthy communication in human relationships at any given profession. However, it is imperative to learn and use communication skills in professions that are involved in extensive human relationships. Hence, it is crucial that PE teachers working in the field of physical education or in sports organizations, coaches and sports directors possess these skills. “Also, via good physical education programs and sports organizations, shaping the ability of movement in human beings whose nature involves movement and communication through movement may ensure healthy and permanent interpersonal relationships ” (Tepeköylü 2007).

“Based on these explanations, it can be stated that movement, games and sports are effective in acquiring communication skills that will facilitate human relationships. Studies that examined whether behaviour changes acquired in the psychological and social areas through physical education, sports activities and games were transferred to general life experiences showed that behaviours acquired in physical and psycho-social areas via physical activities were transferred to related situations in life” (Çamlıyer, 2001).

“Effective communication skills are facilitators in all types of human relationships and all sorts of professional fields. Particularly, professionals who are more extensively involved in human relationships need to have a better command of communication skills. Psychiatrists, psychologists, psychological counselors, social workers, doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers or salesmen can be given examples for these professions (Korkut, 2005).

Communication requires not only transmission of meanings but also understanding them (Robbins,1991:141). People perceive the world and their environments by continuously collecting information. Since they are social beings and contexts they are in are composed of persons and interpersonal relationships, people try to make sense of their world through communicating with others. People who relate to each other both provide information about themselves and at the same time collect information from the others. Hence, the inherent need for explaining oneself and understanding the others have impelled human beings to communicate.

Life is based on change and nothing is static. Progress is not possible without motion. Life involves action. Life involves improvement. Life involves communication. Life involves relationships and interaction with others (Guilane-Nachez, 2003:7). Ability to establish healthy and sound relationships with people helps increase one's self-esteem and strengthen

relationships with others (Caputo, Harry and Colleen, 1994:5).

Effective communication between students and teachers is possible through development of communication skills. This involves effective presentation of messages from the source and effective listening from the receiver of the message. It can also be argued that students learn better with teachers whom they can communicate well. Çetinkanat (1997) has examined teachers' communication skills in the classroom under five dimensions. These dimensions are:

Empathy: Empathy is the foremost of communication skills possessed by teachers. Empathy means understanding others as well as helping them understand themselves. It is important to understand and express unexpressed feelings as well as expressed words. In order to do this, teachers should have a good understanding of the situation through the eyes of others by putting themselves in someone else's shoes (Hall and Hall, 1992). Empathic relationships with students are identified as an important dimension. Since empathy is at the top of teacher communication skills, it is an important skill that needs to be developed during teacher training (Çetinkanat, 1997).

Transparency: Transparency involves explaining one's own feelings and thoughts sincerely without trying to hide them. Transparent teachers are expected to be explicit and clear about course format and exams as they are

clear about their feelings in relationships with their students. Teachers are expected to be natural, frank and transparent rather than appearing different from what they really are.

Equality: Teacher training shouldn't confuse the concept of authority based on education, age, role and status with the concept of being authoritarian. Providing discipline without reverting to authoritarian roles requires knowledge and skills. When teachers lack the required knowledge and skills, it is easy to adopt authoritarian manners. A positive learning atmosphere occurs when there is equality which includes respectful and close relationships between teachers and students, absence of fear and the desire to learn.

Efficacy: This dimension which consists of teaching and assessment tasks includes a series of teacher behaviors.

Efficiency: Efficiency includes feelings of respect for students and using native language clearly and accurately while transferring the knowledge and skills so that students can understand what they learn in their own levels (Nacar,2010).

This study aimed to investigate PE teachers' communication skills. It is believed that high communicative perceptions in PE teachers will affect their performance related to communication skills and their problem solving ability to generate constructive solutions. The study is thought to contribute to PE teachers.

METHOD

This section includes information about study design, universe and sample, data collection tools and data analysis.

Current research is conducted as a quantitative study examining the communication skills of PE teachers employed in secondary and high school

Universe and Sample

Study universe was composed of PE teachers employed in secondary and

high schools in Manisa province during 2012-2013 academic year.

Data Collection Tool

Research data was collected during the fall term of 2012-2013 academic year. After receiving the official research permit to implement to measurement tool from the Governorship's office, the researcher visited the schools in the study sample and distributed the scales which were later collected. When face to face contact with teachers was not possible during data collection process, school principals or vice principals helped with the collection of data forms.

"Teachers' Communication Skills Scale" developed by Çetinkanat (1997) was used in the study to measure teacher perceptions related to their communication skills.

The scale developed by Çetinkanat (1997) to assess teacher perceptions regarding their own communication skills is composed of 44 items used with a 6-point Likert type scale with "always" 6, "almost always" 5, "mostly" 4, "sometimes" 3, "rarely" 2 and "never" 1 options. There are 10 items for empathy, transparency, equality and efficacy dimensions and 4 items for efficiency dimension. Items 2, 23 and 40 in the scale are scored in reverse. Cronbach

alpha values of the sub dimension in the original study were as follows: empathy .67, transparency .67, equality .59, efficacy .45, efficiency .50 and the Cronbach alpha coefficient for internal consistency was 0.81.

Items in the scale was developed by Çetinkanat and presented to 15 academicians for review. Intelligibility of the items was assessed and necessary changes were made in the items that did not convey the intended message.

Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated for general reliability. Methods that are developed to assess test reliability is called reliability analysis and investigating the questions/items in tests is called item analysis. Cronbach alpha coefficient is the most common method in assessing reliability.

Cronbach alpha coefficient for this study was found as 0.61. Results were assessed in 95% confidence interval at $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$ level of significance bi-directionally.

FINDINGS

Table 1. Mean distributions of the study

	Empathy	Transparency	Equality	Efficacy	Efficiency
N	203	203	203	203	203
Mean	1.7419	1.7867	1.9296	1.8616	1.6835
SD	.54234	.49699	.58632	.50581	.72603

Table 1: Table shows the distribution of sub dimensions as Empathy 1.7419, Transparency 1.7867, Equality 1.9296, **Efficacy** 1.8616, Efficiency 1.6835.

Table 2: Correlation analysis of sub dimensions.

		Empathy	Transparency	Equality	Efficacy	Efficiency
Empathy	Pearson	1	.571**	.288**	.175*	.219**
	Correlation		.000	.000	.013	.002
	Sig.	203	203	203	203	203
Transparency	Pearson	.571**	1	.431**	.421**	.256**
	Correlation	.000		.000	.000	.000
	Sig.	203	203	203	203	203
Equality	Pearson	.288**	.431**	1	.595**	.490**
	Correlation	.000	.000		.000	.000
	Sig.	203	203	203	203	203
Efficacy	Pearson	.175*	.421**	.595**	1	.405**
	Correlation	.013	.000	.000		.000
	Sig.	203	203	203	203	203
Efficiency	Pearson	.219**	.256**	.490**	.405**	1
	Correlation	.002	.000	.000	.000	
	Sig.	203	203	203	203	203

Table 2. As observed in the Table, distribution among the sub dimensions of empathy, equality, transparency, efficacy and efficiency were normal. There is a significant and positive relation among PE teachers' communication skills sub dimensions ($p < .01$) ($p < .05$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research aimed to present PE teachers' communication levels. Correlation analysis was undertaken among sub dimensions and the relevant factors that were prominent were presented. 203 PE teachers participated in the study.

Examination of Table 2 points to a high level of relationship among the following sub dimensions: empathy, equality, transparency, efficacy and efficiency ($p < .01$). According to Rogers, empathy is to comprehend life from others' perspectives. Empathy in the process of education is related to educators' efforts

to listen, understand and respond to students by putting themselves in their places. Transparency is clarity and naturalness in character and not presenting a different image based on status or role. Transparency also involves sincere sharing of thoughts and emotions without hiding them (Nacar, 2010). Examination of means ($X=1,7419$) ($X=1,7867$) shows they are similar. Strong relationships between empathy and transparency may be related to the fact that PE teachers do sports and are familiar with competition. Similarly, there are high level relationships between empathy and transparency and the sub dimensions of equality, efficacy and

efficiency (X=1,92) (X=1,86) (X=1,68). There are various studies on PE teachers. In a study on PE teachers' social skill levels, Züleyha (2004) established that PE teachers' social control levels were quite high. Empathy and transparency sub dimensions may be associated with social control. It can be stated that PE teachers have high levels of empathy and perform transparent behaviours. This finding reflects the positive impacts of sports activities.

Here, it can be stated that PE teachers have high levels of communication skills. Equality should be reflected in a manner to create a positive learning atmosphere in which educators and the students are equal since they are both individuals and that there is no distancing based on role and status. When the relationship between the educator and the students is based on closeness, equality and respect, excludes fear and generates willingness to learn, the learning environment will be positive. Efficacy includes a series of teaching behaviours that involves teaching and assessment tasks. Main purpose of efficacy is to support the realization of goals. In the educational process which aims to change student behaviours both mentally and behaviourally, educators should be able to assess the extent of these changes.

Efficiency is an important dimension included among teachers' communication skills since it includes quality in training and efficacy to present the necessary knowledge. Being well trained is crucial in conveying the required information. Züleyha's (2004) findings that PE teachers have high social skill levels in general support the findings of the current

study. Statistically significant communication levels found in the current study and relationships among sub dimensions is related to high communication levels. PE teachers are found to use various aspects of communication actively.

It is interesting to note the extent of expectations from sports and physical education and extent of its impact area in a society which is not involved in sports to a high degree in general. In this case, communication skills of the PE teachers become more important. Çimen (2008) reported that when the functions of communication are taken into consideration -such as education, socialization, providing information, persuasion, influencing, problem solving, reducing anxiety, rewarding and motivation- this is an expected and desired outcome. Communication and motivation are significantly related with each other to reach the goals of the team. In other words, it is the verbal communication that provides team work and integration and therefore motivation (Widyemer and Williams 1991:548). In their study on teacher candidates' communication skills, Güven and Yalçınkaya Akyüz (2001) found significant results related to the sub dimensions of teacher candidates' communication skills. The authors emphasised the importance of communication for teacher candidates. Pepe, Tot and Güler (2005) mentioned that the subjects taught at PE classes improve communication skills. Therefore, PE teachers' high level communication skills may also be associated with the classes taken at university. Based on the results obtained in the current study, it is possible to assert that PE teachers are

social, flexible, sensitive to social problems and have guidance ability and strong empathy skills.

Importance of communication has been emphasized in many studies. Significance among sub-dimensions of communication can be regarded as a determinant characteristic to highlight this importance. It is possible to prove that communication is an important characteristic for teachers. High level of communication skills in PE teachers, who continuously share the same environment with students, parents and colleagues, will also have a positive

influence on their professional performance. Many studies revealed that communication is an important skill for teachers.

As a result; communication skills of PE teachers were found to be high. As they apply both verbal and nonverbal communication skills, they express themselves more clearly during classes and perform better. Assigning PE teachers and sports teachers some tasks that require improving communication will contribute to the development of communication skills to a further extent.

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