IJPE

International Journal of

Progressive Education

Volume 6   Number 1   February, 2010

International Journal of Progressive Education

Frequency: Three times a year; February, June, and October

ISSN: 1554-5210

Indexing/Abstracting:

1- OCLC-WorldCat: http://www.oclc.org/worldcat/default.htm
2- Journal Finder: http://journalfinder.uncg.edu/demo/
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Assessing Cultural Competence in Graduating Students

Hermeet K. Kohli, University of Southern Maine *
Amarpreet S. Kohli, University of Southern Maine **
Ruth Huber, University of Louisville ***
Anna C. Faul, University of Louisville ****

Abstract
Twofold purpose of this study was to develop a framework to understand cultural competence in graduating social work students, and test that framework for appropriateness and predictability using multivariate statistics. Scale and predictor variables were collected using an online instrument from a nationwide convenience sample of graduating social work students (n = 513) from 43 institutions accredited by CSWE. Results revealed that there was a good fit between the statistical model and data collected. The best fit model suggested that different demographic variables of respondents had varying effects on knowledge, attitude and belief, and skill components of cultural competence. Amount of education in human diversity and age were the two variables that affected their cross-cultural knowledge. Amount of education in human diversity, political affiliation, and years of education affected their own attitudes and beliefs while working with diverse populations. The amount of education in human diversity, gender, ethnicity, spirituality, political affiliation, and years in social work job were the 6 demographic variables of the respondents that influenced their skills when working with people from diverse backgrounds. Implications for education and practice are discussed.

Keywords – cultural competence, Cross-Cultural Inventory, multivariate statistics

* Dr. Hermeet K. Kohli, Ph.D. in Social Work, is Associate Professor, School of Social Work, University of Southern Maine, Portland, ME, (hkohli@usm.maine.edu)

** Dr. Amarpreet S. Kohli Ph.D., MBA, is Assistant Professor, School of Business, University of Southern Maine, Portland, ME. (akohli@usm.maine.edu),

*** Dr. Ruth Huber Ph.D. in Social Welfare, is Professor and Director of the Ph.D. Program, Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville, KY. (ruth.huber@louisville.edu),

**** Dr. Ann C. Faul, Ph.D. in Social Work, is Associate Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Kent School of Social Work, University of Louisville, KY. (acfaul01@louisville.edu)

Introduction

We live in a multicultural society where people from different ethnic, socio-cultural, and geographic backgrounds live together. One in every 3 residents in the U.S. currently identify themselves as part of an ethnic group other than single race non-Hispanic White, 1 of every 5 Americans will be 65 years of age or older by 2030, in 2002, around 18% of the population reported as having some level of differential ability, and 11% were reported to have severe disabilities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Nevertheless, overt and covert prejudice, hatred, and discrimination are still ugly realities, and there is division and conflict between people of various racial and cultural groups (Sue, 1999). Despite continuous efforts to fight oppression and racist ideologies, inequalities are still blatant and explosive. In this context, human service providers face several dilemmas when providing services to people from different groups. To provide ethically sound services, practitioners need to be equipped with cultural knowledge and cross-cultural skills.

Current emphasis on teaching human diversity is based on the assumption that teaching about diversity leads to awareness, knowledge, understanding, acceptance, and sensitivity of differences. These attributes are seen as prerequisites for empowering clients from diverse cultural and social environments (Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen, 1996). In addition to educational experiences, students' own socio-politico-cultural and behavioral characteristics influence their perspectives on diversity. However, these assumptions need to be tested in professional programs in higher education. Despite the continued attention that diversity education has received, not many empirical studies have contributed to our understanding of the processes involved in the development of cultural competence.

Purpose of the Study

The twofold purpose of this study was to develop a framework to understand cultural competence in graduating social work students, and test that framework for appropriateness and predictability using multivariate statistics. An instrument (Cross Cultural Inventory, CCI) was developed to measure the three major components of cultural competence: (a) knowledge, (b) attitudes and beliefs, and (c) skills. The psychometric properties of CCI were tested on a nationwide sample of graduate social work students. Individual background variables that affect cultural competence were also collected. We then tested the fit of the actual data with the hypothesized model using structural equation modeling. The article is organized in the following order: (a) conceptualization and theoretical foundations of cultural competence, (b) development of CCI, (c) research design, (d) results, (e) discussion and applications to education and practice and (f) limitations and suggestions for future research.

Conceptualization and Theoretical Foundations of Cultural Competence

Becoming a culturally competent professional involves: (a) the development of attitudes and skills that cut across cultures, and (b) culture-specific education that avoids stereotypes (Imber-Black, 1997). While sensitizing students to diversity issues, it seems imperative to initiate a dialogue on culture because people do not thrive in isolation, and culture shapes how people experience their worlds. Culture plays a substantial role in influencing worldviews of both professionals and clients

(Harper & McFadden, 2003). This basic tenet is a vital component of how services are delivered and received. If professionals have positive self-identities, they are better able to value and respect their clients' identities (Pinderhughes, 1989). In this section we define culture, competence, and cultural competence as they pertain to this study, followed by major unifying themes emerging from psychology and social work theories.

Culture

Although sometimes limited to social class and race, culture implies a way of life in which the people of different groups absorb and assign specific meaning to their actions over time (Marger, 2003). For the purpose of this study, a very broad and universal definition of culture was chosen, where all forms of social and biological identities or shared experiences are included (Ramsey, 2000). It embraces the way in which variables like ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, political affiliation, physical and mental abilities, and geographic location, intermingle to influence the values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices of people (Mitchell, 1999).

Competence

Competence refers to ways of living acquired by various groups to survive in their environments and includes their abilities to function successfully (Aponte, 1995). Applied to the competency of professionals, they too, need to acquire ways to practice that honor diverse clients. In the next section we define cultural competence.

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence can be defined as the ability of professionals to function successfully with people from different cultural backgrounds, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, culture, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, age, and national origin (Appleby, Colon, & Hamilton, 2001). A set of similar attitudes, actions, and procedures are compiled by professionals to enable them to work efficiently in multicultural environments (Cross, 1988; Rice, 2007). Cultural competence begins with an awareness of one's own cultural beliefs and practices, and the recognition that others believe in different truths/realities than one's own. It also implies that there is more than one way of doing the same thing in a right manner. Awareness of one's own biases/prejudices is essential to this process and is rooted in respect, validation, and openness toward differences among people (Green, 1999).

Major contributions of psychology theories

The psychology models developed to understand cultural competence are dynamic in nature. They all emphasize the effects of the interaction of human beings with their unique environments. There is continuous apprehension in the counseling and educational psychology literature regarding the nature of culturally competent practice (Arbona, 1998; Fischer, Jome, & Atkinson, 1998). Emic (culturally specific) and etic (universal) are two approaches to counseling the culturally different. Three-dimensional models for multicultural counseling and the process oriented models for

cultural competence are based on emic approaches. The worldview theories, on the other hand, are etic or universal in nature. The multicultural movement began with the aim to provide culturally sensitive services, whereas earlier, emphasis was placed on making clients fit into the service categories (Harper & McFadden, 2003). The focus shifted with the increased awareness about diversity issues and understanding that no particular ways of adaptation/intervention were much better than others. Rather, the social-political-economic-cultural situations in which people are embedded define/color their perceptions of reality.

In essence, cultural competence of professionals is affected by the processes that shape their cultural identities, which are, in turn, influenced by their own worldviews and the worldviews of their clients. The differences between the clients and the workers in any helping relationship cannot be ignored, but need to be brought to the forefront to develop trust and acceptance in the professional relationship. In order to reach that level of cultural competence, workers need to be aware of their own attitudes and beliefs, and develop knowledge and skills to effectively work with clients from diverse backgrounds. The major contributions from the psychology literature toward the development of the cultural competence framework for this study are summarized in Figure 1.
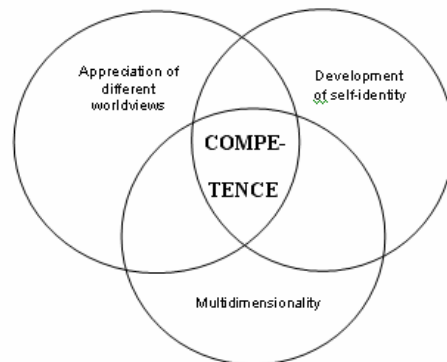
Figure 1. **Psychological frameworks for understanding cultural competence.**

Major contributions of social work theories

Anderson (2003) depicted a cultural framework with three major perspectives on human diversity: (a) ethnocultural diversity, (b) oppression, and (c) vulnerable life situations (Figure 2). This classification matches perfectly with the development of cultural competence in the social work literature. Two central frameworks have been the strengths and the empowerment approaches, with a vision that all human beings receive social justice. In order to provide justice to all, we need to (a) fight oppression, (b) value and recognize worldview differences among people, and (c) enable people in vulnerable life situations to maximize their potential even in times of adversity, by providing support and resources for them (Anderson, 2003; Krentzman & Townsend, 2008; Lum 2003; Teasley, 2005). Other frameworks can be seen as different manifestations of these core ideas. In the next section we describe the development of Cross Cultural Inventory (CCI) for collecting data on the predictor and scale variables.

ETHNOCULTURAL FRAMEWORK

Ethnic-Sensitive

Humanistic

Coverdale   Integrated
                   Learning

Strengths

Empowerment

Ecological   People of Color

Cognitive   Constructivist
Sophistication

ENVIRONMENT   VULNERABLE LIFE SITUATIONS
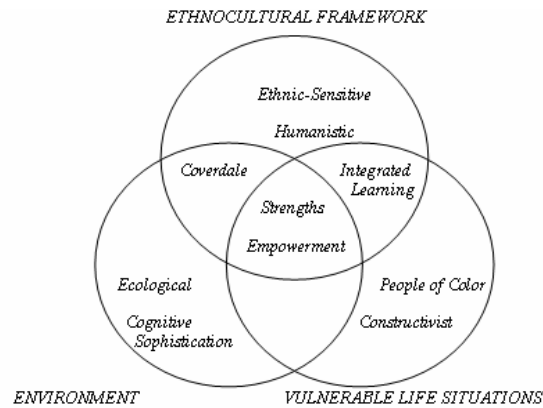
Figure 2. **Social Work frameworks for understanding cultural competence.**

Development of CCI

In order to develop CCI it was imperative to define the different components of cultural competence. We incorporated these 3 components based on the literature review: (a) knowledge, (b) attitudes and beliefs, and (c) skills that were identified in the literature (Boyle & Springer, 2001; Holcomb-McCoy & Meyers, 1999; Krentzman & Townsend, 2008; Lum, 2003; Manoleas, 1994; Sue et al., 1996). Using social constructivist and postmodern perspective for integrating cross-cultural issues in teaching social work, instructors aim to combine students' theoretical understanding with personal experiences in a reflective manner (George & Tsang, 1999; Lee & Greene, 1999). First step is try to create self awareness among the students about their own socio-cultural worldviews, followed by emphasis on appreciation of varied ways of handling diverse situations through input of knowledge and skills.

Competence includes both the knowledge as well as the experiential components, not an either/or approach. Students need to be sensitized about diversity issues not only on the knowledge level, but also on understanding and insight levels. It involves the development of understanding culture and cultural variations, and application of the knowledge while working with clients from diverse backgrounds (Hurdle, 2002). Hence, cultural competence can never be learned in a vacuum, but requires active learning and application over a long period of time (Vonk, 2001). Conceptual and operational definitions for the 3 components of cultural competence that guided the development of CCI are now elucidated.

Knowledge

Conceptual definition

In the context of cultural competence knowledge is defined as the specific information (facts, theories, and principles) taught in the course on human diversity/social justice/oppressed populations to facilitate culturally diverse social work (Lum, 2003). Ponterotto, Rieger, Berrett, and Sparks (1994) combined the knowledge and skills component to measure universal counseling knowledge and detailed multicultural counseling knowledge. LaFramboise, Coleman, and Hernandez

(1991) also measured a composite score of cultural competence. Sodowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, and Wise (1994), however, included a specific knowledge component that measures treatment planning, case conceptualization, and research related to cross-cultural counseling. This component included the pedagogic proficiencies that are needed by therapists to be culturally effective.

Operational definition

For the purpose of this research, knowledge was defined as the act or state of knowing. It is a clear perception of fact, truth, or duty, and cognition. In terms of cultural competence, the knowledge component includes the case conceptualization, treatment planning, and research related to cultural competence. It also includes the abilities of workers to actively attempt to understand the worldview of culturally different clients, as well as the political and institutional barriers that may affect each of them differently.

Attitudes and Beliefs

Conceptual definition

Even though most researchers have adapted Sue, et al.'s (1996) framework for understanding and empirically measuring cultural competence, different labels have been suggested for the attitudes and beliefs component, such as awareness and values. Ponterotto et al. (1994) identified a separate component — an awareness subscale that includes cultural awareness of multicultural issues. Lum (2003) identified cultural awareness as "crucial to an awareness of ethnicity and racism and its impact on professional attitude, perception, and behavior" (Lum, 2003, p. 64).

Operational definition

Attitudes/beliefs refer to a positive or negative evaluation, at some level of intensity, toward an attitude object—nothing more, nothing less. They play important roles in our social adaptation and functioning in personal and professional spheres. Our awareness is affected by our ability to understand and change our beliefs and attitudes. When working with different cultural beliefs, our attitudes and beliefs (based on our past personal and professional exposure) shape how we interact with and provide services to clients. Hence the attitudes and beliefs component of cultural competence measures whether individuals are actively engaged in the process of gaining awareness regarding their own assumptions about different human behaviors, values, attitudes, biases, and preconceived notions.

Skills

Conceptual definition

There has been an ongoing debate - whether the skills component is an independent component or is inseparable from the knowledge and awareness components. Counselors might be culturally self-aware and culturally competent, but still need skills in collecting, organizing, and evaluating cultural data (Ridley, Li, & Hill, 1998). Sodowsky et al. (1994) included a specific skills component to measure

both emic (culturally specific) and etic (universal) multicultural counseling skills. According to Manoleas (1994) the skills component includes the development of strategies for conducting effective interviews, assessment, and evaluation. It also involves effective communication that facilitates a positive rapport that strengthens the helping relationship and enables both clients and professionals to navigate all cross-cultural barriers.

Operational definition

The skills component is measured through the ability of the worker to actively acquire appropriate and relevant clinical skills and techniques in working with diverse clients, i.e. alertness of workers' own communication styles and barriers. Research and sampling design are outlined in the following section.

Research Design

The psychometric properties of CCI were tested on a nationwide sample of graduate social work students using a cross-sectional research design. Individual background variables that affect cultural competence were also collected. EZSurvey, an Internet based program, was used to put CCI online for 2 months. SPSS 15.0 was utilized for testing the reliability and validity calculations. Purposive sampling was employed and the unit of analysis was graduate level social work students in CSWE accredited institutions. The deans/directors of all 147 CSWE accredited Schools of Social Work were asked via email to invite their students to participate. After gaining their agreement, technology specialists in each school were asked to forward an invitational email to all of their graduate social work students. CCI was put online and after 3 weeks, a reminder email was sent to the deans/directors. Students from 29% of the CSWE accredited Schools of Social Work (43) participated in the study, and Figure 3 shows participation of the schools by geographic location.
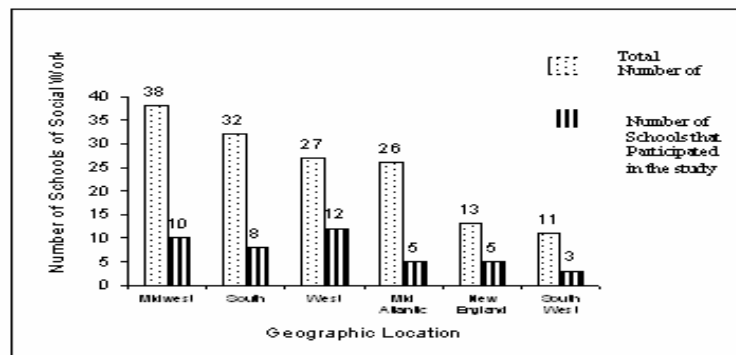
Figure 3. **Participation of social work schools by geographic location.**

An anonymous web based survey allowed us to reach out to a larger sample (n =513) from diverse geographic locations in a very short period of time (6 weeks). It was cost effective, and completed by the respondents at their convenience. After testing the psychometric properties of CCI, structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized to generate the best fit model that assessed the development of cultural

competence in graduating masters level social work students using Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) software (Aurbuckle & Wothke, 1999).

Results

Demographics of the Respondents

The convenience sample (n =513) of graduate social work students was from 43 CSWE accredited Schools of Social Work in the U.S. Women constituted 90% of the sample, 78% of the respondents identified themselves as European American, 43% were single, about 78% reported that they were very spiritually oriented, and only 15% of respondents reported having a disability of any kind. Around 12% of responding students identified themselves as Republican, 18% as Independents, and 42% as Democrats. Nearly 12% identified themselves with the others category, i.e. liberal, Green Party, progressive, radical, socialist democrat. More than half of the respondents lived in urban areas, 25% resided in suburban areas, and only 13% were from rural areas.

Students were asked to record amount of diversity content to which they have had in their higher education curriculum. Twelve percent of the responding students reported that they did not have any diversity content in their higher educational experience, and approximately 18% reported that not a lot of diversity content had been covered in their educational careers, although 70% indicated that diversity education had been an important component in their professional training.

The mean age of the group was 31.19 (SD 8.76), with a range from 22 to 67 years. The sample was predominantly heterosexual (88%), 4% identified themselves as bisexual and 6% as homosexual. The monthly family income of the respondents ranged from 0 to $68,000, with a mean of $30,557 in the first analysis. All of the cases with no income were included as it was assumed that one might be a dependent full time student with no personal income. The group had around 18 years of education on average (SD 1.33), and a mean of 3.81 years of social work employment, with a range of 0 to 30 years (SD 4.33).

Psychometric Characteristics of CCI

CCI (originally 57 items) contained three unidimensional scales: (a) knowledge (16 items), (b) attitudes and beliefs (23 items), and (c) skills (18 items). CCI items were reduced to increase scale validity and reliability based on these criteria: (a) item correlations > 0.30 consistently, (b) single item-total correlations > 0.45, (c) corrected item-total correlations mean > 0.50, and (d) acceptable value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.80 and above. The pool of items was thus reduced to 22 items (Table 1). The knowledge and skills components of CCI had high reliability (0.80 and 0.88), and the reliability for attitudes and beliefs was 0.76, which is acceptable to use in group analyses. The validity results for the three subscales are detailed below.

Table 1
Items in the 3 Subscales

Subscale and #	Items
Knowledge 1	I understand people from a different racial background than mine.
Knowledge 3	I understand people of a different gender than mine.
Knowledge 4	I have knowledge of characteristics of the clients whom I serve.
Knowledge 6	I understand people from a different age group than mine.
Knowledge 9	I understand people from a different social class than mine.
Knowledge 11	I understand people with different abilities (mental/physical).
Attitudes and Beliefs 6	I am comfortable discussing gender issues.
Attitudes and Beliefs 8	I am empathetic to the problems faced by homosexuals.
Attitudes and Beliefs 9	I am comfortable discussing political issues different from mine.
Attitudes and Beliefs 11	I am comfortable with the differences between my clients and myself.
Attitudes and Beliefs 14	I respect indigenous helping practices in different cultural communities.
Attitudes and Beliefs 17	I am comfortable working with people from various religious backgrounds.
Skills 1	I brainstorm various techniques that would be helpful when working with culturally diverse clients.
Skills 2	I know what to do when there is value conflict between my client and myself.
Skills 4	I identify the multicultural variables (e.g. ethnicity, age, gender) that may influence the intervention process.
Skills 5	I know how to terminate with clients/systems in a way that links them to culturally sensitive community resources.
Skills 8	I know how to establish intervention goals jointly with clients.
Skills 9	I know how to formulate culturally appropriate intervention strategies.
Skills 11	I have the ability to deal with conflicts between my clients' values and organizational policy.
Skills 12	I know how to assess cultural strengths.
Skills 15	I know how to establish follow-up strategies when working with culturally diverse clients.
Skills 16	I have the skills to use cultural differences as strengths in my intervention.

Subscale 1: Knowledge

Table 2 shows the values for all of the criteria being measured for item selection and to calculate the content validity of the knowledge subscale. The six knowledge items correlated highly with each other, and not with the attitudes and

skills subscales, thereby validating the content validity of the knowledge subscale. The coefficient alpha was 0.83, indicating a respectable level of internal consistency (Springer, Abell, & Nugent, 2002).

Table 2
Content Validity of Knowledge Subscale

Item #	Knowledge (Total Correlations)	Knowledge (Corrected Item Total Correlations)	Attitudes (Total Correlations)	Skills (Total Correlations)
K1	0.758	0.618	0.275	0.389
K3	0.762	0.632	0.299	0.323
K4	0.634	0.499	0.409	0.530
K6	0.761	0.631	0.286	0.372
K9	0.800	0.691	0.476	0.512
K11	0.687	0.531	0.334	0.387
Mean	0.734	0.600	0.346	0.418

Subscale 2: Attitudes and Beliefs

Table 3 lists the 6 items that constitute the attitudes and beliefs subscale and reports the criteria used for measuring the content validity as 0.48. One major problem in the attitudes and beliefs scale was that some of the items from the attitudes and beliefs subscale correlated well with the knowledge and skills subscales. For example, note that A-14 in Table 5 correlates more strongly with Skills than with Attitudes and Beliefs; however, upon examination by the authors and a panel of experts a professional judgment was made for content validity that the statement itself (I respect indigenous helping practices in different cultural communities) clearly indicates a respectful attitude. The confirmatory factor analysis technique only aids us in finding whether the items are highly correlated and loading together; it cannot help us build theories or constructs (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Even though the Coefficient alpha of 0.75. is not seen as a desirable value of alpha in the practice scenarios, it is acceptable when conducting analyses on group level data (Springer, Abell, & Nugent, 2002).

Table 3
Content Validity of Attitudes and Beliefs Subscale

Item	Attitudes and Beliefs (Total Correlations)	Corrected Item Total Correlations	Knowledge (Total Correlations)	Skills (Total Correlations)
A6	0.692	0.526	0.351	0.432
A8	0.655	0.469	0.253	0.311
A9	0.716	0.508	0.297	0.357
A11	0.633	0.469	0.383	0.456
A14	0.657	0.491	0.293	0.545
A17	0.627	0.443	0.297	0.369
Mean	0.663	0.484	0.312	0.412

Subscale 3: Skills

Table 4 reports the criteria used for the skills subscale content validity. All of the criteria were met, with content validity of 0.60. Coefficient alpha was 0.88, again a respectable level of internal consistency (Springer, Abell, & Nugent, 2002).

Table 4
Content Validity of Skills Subscale

Item #	Skills (Total Correlations)	Skills (Corrected Item Total Correlations)	Knowledge (Total Correlations)	Attitudes and Beliefs (Total Correlations)
S1	0.607	0.495	0.348	0.346
S2	0.632	0.528	0.430	0.377
S4	0.667	0.581	0.379	0.415
S5	0.738	0.646	0.372	0.399
S8	0.688	0.604	0.369	0.442
S9	0.797	0.738	0.451	0.457
S11	0.624	0.520	0.366	0.448

S12	0.687	0.605	0.381	0.441
S15	0.751	0.675	0.414	0.488
S16	0.719	0.641	0.379	0.421
Mean	0.691	0.603	0.389	0.423

All three components together explained 40% of the variance, and the correlations were moderately strong (ranging from 0.41 to 0.74) (Table 5). We now discuss the findings from the best fit model on cultural competence.

Table 5
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Factor Loading Estimates*

	Factors		
Item #	1 (Knowledge)	2 (Attitudes)	3 (Skills)
K1	.655	7.214E-02	.215
K3	.708	.150	9.329E-02
K4	.429	.217	.400
K6	.694	.111	.161
K9	.649	.299	.293
K11	.512	.180	.228
A6	.185	.568	.237
A8	.103	.546	.141
A9	.137	.585	.164
A11	.211	.417	.332
A14	5.019E-02	.428	.482
A17	.157	.411	.244
S1	.193	.160	.474
S2	.302	.176	.463
S4	.196	.230	.535
S5	.164	.154	.659
S8	.174	.247	.579
S9	.227	.181	.736
S11	.194	.312	.442
S12	.169	.242	.585
S15	.176	.227	.686
S16	.166	.162	.661

* Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Statistical Fit between the Theoretical Framework and the Data

Relationships were examined within cultural competence, a latent variable with three indicators: knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, and skills, along with other background variables of the respondents. The hypothesized model is presented in Figure 4. Ovals represent latent variables, rectangles represent measured variables, and the small round circle show the estimated error factor. The absence of a line connecting variables implies a lack of a hypothesized direct effect.
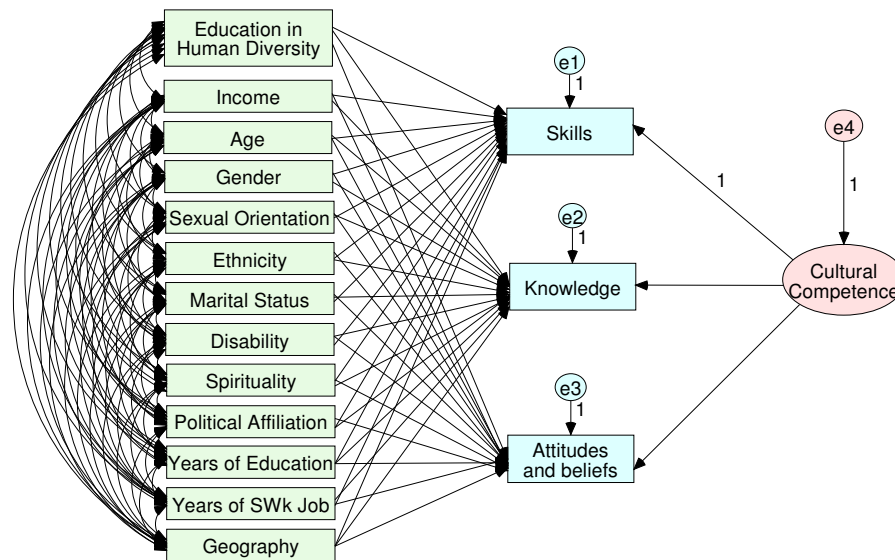
Figure 4. Model to assess cultural competence in graduating social work students.

The statistical model proposed that despite the inclusion of diversity education for development of culturally competent practitioners, their individual differences in age, income, gender, sexual orientation, spirituality, political affiliation, race/ethnicity, physical and mental abilities, years of education, and years of work experience (independent variables), strongly impact levels of cultural competence (the dependent variable).

Measures of fit

The model was recursive, and the total number of distinct parameters was estimated to be 136. The number of distinct sample parameters was equal to the number of distinct sample moments (136). Hence, the degrees of freedom was zero. The chi-square value was 0, and the probability level could not be identified. This implies that the model was just identified. All possible paths were initially included in the saturated model. In the next step, identifying the best fit model, some of the constraints among the parameters were removed. The obtained solutions of the statistical model (based on the C.R. and p. values of the regression coefficients) were

used to modify the model to improve its fit to the observed data (Hoyle, 1995; Maruyama, 1998; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).   The parameters that were not statistically significant were gradually deleted and goodness of fit was improved, based on the significance levels obtained through testing the interactions of each variable one by one. The final reduced model was generated (hereafter referred to as *the Best Fit Cultural Competence Model*) where few indicators explained maximum variations in the development of cultural competence.

The overall fit information for the Best Fit Model is: 13) x^2, N = 513) = 12.761, p > 0.466, GFI = 0.966, AGFI = 0.977, TLI = 1, CFI = 1, and RMSEA = 0. Table 6 briefly summarizes the abbreviations and acceptable ranges for all the measures of fit that were used as modeling criteria. The Best Fit Model fit the data well as the x^2 value was not significant (0.466). The model is further supported by the power inherent in the sample size of 513. Even with that level of power, the chi square did not yield differences between the data and the model.

Table 6
Model Fit Indices Adapted from Dilalla (2000) and Hoyle and Panter (1995)

Test Name	Ideal Score	Brief Explanation
Absolute Fit Indices		
Chi-square statistic (x^2)	p > 0.05	"Statistical test of the lack of fit resulting from over-identifying restrictions placed on a model. Contrary to common belief, the x^2 evaluates the fixed rather than the free parameters in SEM" (Hoyle & Panter, 1995, p. 166). "It is useful for comparing groups" (Dilalla, 2000, 452).
Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)	> 0.90	"Indexes the relative amount of the observed variances and covariances accounted for by a model. Analogous to R^2 commonly used to summarize results of multiple regression analyses" (Hoyle & Panter, 1995, p. 166). "Behaves consistently across estimation methods" (Dilalla, 2000, 452).
Adjusted goodness-of-fit (AGFI)	> 0.90	"Adjusts GFI for degrees of freedom" (Dilalla, 2000, 452).
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	< 0.05	"Measures absolute fit but adds penalty for lack of parsimony" (Dilalla, 2000, 452).
Relative Fit Indices		
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	> 0.90	"Compares the lack of fit of the target model to the lack of fit of a baseline model, usually the independence model. Value estimates the relative improvement per degree of freedom of the target model over a baseline model. Only recommended for large samples (n > 150)" (Hoyle & Panter, 1995, p. 166). "It performs best with maximum likelihood (ML)

		method" (Dilalla, 2000, 452).
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	> 0.90	"Same as TLI, but more consistent across different estimation methods" (Hoyle & Panter, 1995, p. 166).
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	> 0.90	"Indexes the relative reduction in lack of fit as estimated by the noncentral ² א of a target model versus the baseline model" (Hoyle & Panter, 1995, p. 167).

The Best Fit Model is depicted in Figure 5. The Best Fit Model suggested that different demographic variables have varying effects on the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, and skills components of cultural competence. The amount of education in human diversity, gender, ethnicity, spirituality, political affiliation, and years in social work job were the 6 demographic variables of the respondents that influenced their skills when working with people from diverse backgrounds. Amount of education in human diversity and age were the two variables that affected their cross-cultural knowledge. Amount of education in human diversity (hereby also referred to as diversity education), political affiliation, and years of education affected their own attitudes and beliefs while working with diverse populations.
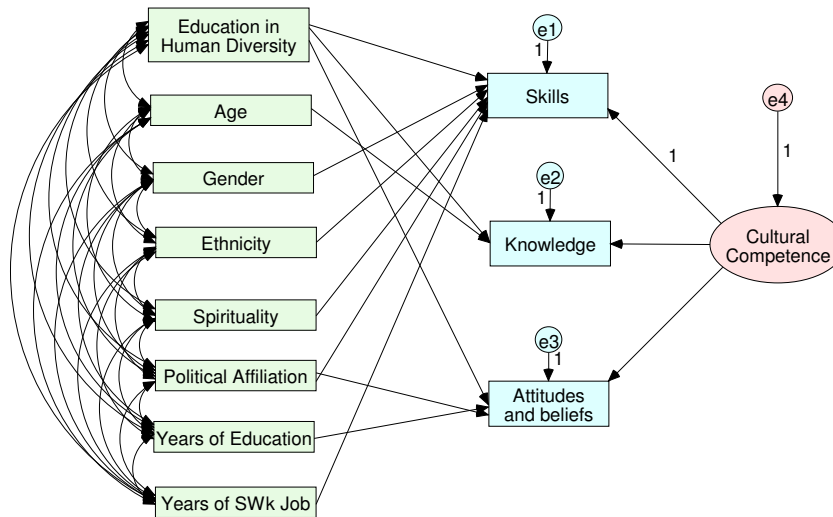
Figure 5. **Best Fit Model to assess cultural competence in graduating social work students.**

Correlation matrix

Table 7 lists the sample correlation estimates of all the parameters in the Best Fit Model. The correlation matrix shows the strengths of the relationship between diversity education and the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, and skills components of cultural competence. Hence, diversity education interacts with all three components

of cultural competence, although the correlations are not very strong. This can be explained by the presence of residual errors in the model. This implies that even though knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, and skills are important components of cultural competence, there are other components that were not measured in CCI.

Table 7
Sample Correlation Estimates

	DE	AG	GE	ET	SA	PA	YJ	YE	AT	KN	SK
DE	1										
AG	0.040	1									
GE	0.026	0.224	1								
ET	0.005	-0.044	-0.057	1							
SA	0.157	0.279	0.057	-0.132	1						
PA	0.049	-0.030	0.036	-0.097	-0.133	1					
YJ	0.086	0.394	0.104	-0.084	0.128	0.013	1				
YE	0.051	0.005	0.014	0.080	-0.051	0.065	0.044	1			
AT	0.236	0.075	-0.018	0.022	0.024	0.196	0.054	-0.064	1		
KN	0.201	0.111	-0.032	0.006	0.102	-0.033	0.096	-0.044	0.454	1	
SK	0.350	0.117	-0.058	-0.11	0.142	0.138	0.192	-0.045	0.614	0.562	1

Note. DE = Diversity Education; AG = Age; GE = Gender; ET = Ethnicity; SA = Spiritual Affiliation; PA = Political Affiliation; YJ = Years of Social Work Job; YE = Years of Social Work Education; AT = Attitudes and beliefs; KN = Knowledge; SK = Skills

Total effects

The total standardized effects of the Best Fit Model are presented in Table 8. This model explains approximately 77% of variance in the skills component, followed by 53% of variance in the attitudes and beliefs, and 43% of variance in the knowledge component of cultural competence. For this sample, it is evident that the strongest effects of all three components of cultural competence (knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, and skills) are from education that they receive on human diversity issues all through their educational careers. Age has a slight positive effect on knowledge; one unit increase in age results in 0.06 units increase in knowledge toward diversity. The more Democratic the views of the students from the sample, the more they become aware of and are sensitive to their own attitudes and beliefs by 0.205 units. There was an inverse relationship between total number of years of education and attitudes and beliefs of the students. For every one unit increase in their age, their attitudes and beliefs towards working in diverse settings became more negative by 0.047 units.

Table 8
Standardized Estimates of Best Fit Model

Endogenous Variables	Exogenous Variables	Standardized Total Effects
Knowledge ($R^2 = 0.43$)	Education in Human Diversity	0.198
	Age	0.065
Attitudes and beliefs ($R^2 = 0.53$)	Education in Human Diversity	0.227
	Political Affiliation	0.205
	Total Number of Years of Education	-0.047
Skills ($R^2 = 0.77$)	Education in Human Diversity	0.326
	Political Affiliations	0.142
	Years of Social Work Employment	0.121
	Spirituality	0.062
	Ethnicity	-0.105
	Gender	-0.064

Political affiliation had a positive relationship with the skills of the students. One unit increase in the thinking towards democratic views increased the skills by 0.142 units. Moreover, one unit increase in total number of years of work experience in social work related jobs resulted in an increase in skills by 0.121 units. Similarly, spirituality had a positive relationship with skills. One unit increase in the level of spirituality resulted in an increase in the skills by 0.062 units. The inverse relationship between the skills component and ethnicity explains that people from other minority groups were more skilled than Caucasians in working with diverse populations. As men were coded as 1 and women as 0, the inverse relationship between gender and skills implies that women were more skilled when working with diverse populations than men by 0.064 units.

Discussion and Applications to Education and Practice

The focus of this cross sectional research was to raise our understanding about the development of cultural competence in graduate social work students. CCI was developed to measure the three components of cultural competence: (a) knowledge, (b) attitudes and beliefs, and (c) skills, and a factor analysis confirmed these three factors. The knowledge and skills components of CCI had high reliability (0.80 and 0.88), and the reliability for attitudes and beliefs was 0.76, which is acceptable to use in group analyses. Moderately high correlations were observed for the three subscales indicating that the participants were very culturally competent (knowledge: 0.734, attitudes and beliefs: 0.663, and skills: 0.691).

The Best Fit Model predicted that amount of education in human diversity as well as the graduate social work students' own background variables influence cultural competence. *Amount of education in human diversity* was strongly correlated with all three components of cultural competence (knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, and skills). Therefore, education about diversity issues is an important construct in the process of understanding the development of cultural competence.

Political affiliation was directly related to students' attitudes and beliefs as well as their skills when working with clients from diverse backgrounds, with more liberal students demonstrating more cross-cultural competence. Inclusion of diversity education has always resulted in a heated debate in both academic and political circles (Marger, 2003). Some liberals and radicals argue that multiculturalism, as a movement, does nothing to fight injustices inherent in social structures (Alexander & Smelser, 1999). They believe that focus on human diversity education should be toward making practitioners aware and respectful of differences among people. Moreover, their attitudes and beliefs about working with people who are different are more open and respectful than people with conservative thinking. This implies that the more conservative and less liberal the students, the more fixed their ideas become.

The total number of years of education of the respondents was inversely related to students' attitudes and beliefs. This implies that the higher the number of years of education they received, the more conservative their thinking becomes. This finding is in contrast to general assumptions that more education leads to increased cultural competence. In this sample, however, more education was connected to less cultural competence. It could be interpreted that with more number of years of education people become firm in their attitudes, and may even more rigid in their thinking and attached to their own theoretical frameworks. Another possible explanation of this finding is that people whose professional education began several years ago might not have been exposed to diversity issues, although age appears to have enhanced cultural competence. Historically, teaching about working with diverse populations was not always seen as important. Only in the late 1970s and early 1980s did the focus on human diversity issues gain importance. Hence, students who earned their bachelor's degrees earlier might not have experienced the current focus on diversity.

Caucasian students in this sample perceived themselves to be less skilled in working with diverse populations than students from other ethnic groups. This supports Mitchell's (1999) finding that non-White counselors were more skilled than their White counterparts. We can theoretically explain that people from other minority groups who experienced some form of racism/discrimination themselves, appear to be more skilled in helping culturally different clients. However, this finding cannot be lifted out of context and it would be imprudent to make such a statement because the interaction among the different background variables was not studied here.

Female students perceived themselves to be more skilled than men in working in cross-cultural environments, and older students perceived themselves to be more skilled than their younger peers. This age factor is in contrast to Mitchell's (1999) finding that younger people were more skilled in working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Students in this study who reported more years of experience in social work also reported higher skill levels. This also contrasts with Mitchell's (1999) findings. Current data imply that as professionals gain experience and learn over the years, they become more culturally competent. Spirituality was also related to the skills: those who reported being more spiritual also perceived themselves to be more skilled in working with diverse populations.

The demographics that best explained the different components of cultural competence were amount of education in human diversity, ethnicity, political affiliation, and years of social work employment. Years of education, age, and gender also explained a small proportion of cultural competence. These results, however, need to be understood in context of the sample of this population and be interpreted with caution, as the residual errors were very high. Even though these relationships were significant at 0.000, correlations were relatively low. This suggests that there are other variables that account for within and between group differences that were not evident in the literature.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

One major limitation of this study is that the sample for this study was self-selected. Second, the internet based format might have skewed the results and affected the degree to which the participants are representative of the population of graduate social work students. Thirdly, CCI depended on self-report and there might have been some degree of social desirability of response choices, which is hard to correct. Moreover, there was high correlation among the different subscales (knowledge, attitudes and beliefs, and skill) that measured cultural competence and only 40% of the variance was explained by these three subscales, indicating that there are other variables that were not indicated in the current literature on cultural competence. There may be other variables that accounted for individual differences that have not been found in the literature.

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An Evaluation of Teachers' Perceptions of Teaching Social Skills to Fifth Grade Students within the Scope of Social Studies Lessons

Cavus Sahin*
Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University

Abstract
The purpose was to evaluate teachers' perceptions of teaching social skills to Fifth grade students using social studies lessons. The survey model has been used as a research method. The 5th grade teachers working in elementary schools in Canakkale province included in the scope of the study have been interviewed and a questionnaire has been formulated in this direction. Statistical methods as "r-test", "F-test", "t-test" besides % (percentage) and mean ($\overline{X}$) have been used in terms of variables. Results of the study indicates that social skill levels found according to the social skill points in the research were adequate; teachers who have not participated in in-service training activities have the ability to teach students in observation skills better with respect to those who have not undergone such training. There was no significant relationship between effectively instructing students in sub-aspects of social skills by teachers and the educational status and occupational seniority of those teachers.

Key Words: Elementary education, social skills, class teacher, social studies lesson

** Dr. Cavus Sahin is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Education in Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey. His research focuses on areas of curriculum studies and teacher education.

Introduction

Human beings feel the need for becoming a social being through each period of their lives. They have a tendency to meet these needs by making social contacts, existing in social environments, and interacting or participating within a group (Yildirim, 2006). It is rather important for an individual to have skills to be able to receive positive reactions by another people and prevent negative reactions. Bandura argues that individuals do not have to learn everything directly; rather, they can learn many things by observing the experiences of other people. Individuals perform the reinforced behaviors of models they observe while they do not perform the punished behaviors (Egen & Kauchack, 1992). In order to meet these requirements, we need to obtain some other skills necessary to live together with people beyond those characteristics with which we demonstrate at birth.

A number of skills are required for an individual to make mutual and healthy relationships with other people. These skills are called *social skills* (Yıldırım, 2006). Social skills are defined as understanding both one's own and other individuals' feelings, thoughts and behaviors related to various interactions, and behaving according to that understanding. Social skills are also defined as the "process of propounding the skilled behavior for a definite target" (Cubukcu & Gultekin, 2006). Gresham and Elliott (1990:1) describe social skills as "*learned behaviors accepted as social and giving an individual chance to make a stronger interaction with other people and avoiding socially unacceptable reactions*" (Seven, 2006). According to Hops (1983), social skills are a behavioral pattern performed in a social situation. According to Dowrick (1986), social skills are "the skill of being able to behave as to be accepted socially in a definite atmosphere and to be useful for both one's own and the one across." (p.5).

Gresham and Eliot (1990) have described social skills as "one's socially learned acceptable behaviors which provide interactions with other people by avoiding socially unacceptable behaviors." (p.3)

Kelly (1982) identifies social skills as learned behaviors which are used in the interpersonal relationships providing or maintaining positive reinforcements from the environment.

Social skills appear as behaviors, they have interpersonal properties, they are desirable behaviors for people, they have tendency to continue communication and interaction, and they can be repeated and determined. Skills for initiating interpersonal relationships, continuing them and completing them appropriately can be evaluated within the context of social skills (Yildirim, 2006). Social skills have an important role in an individual's life because it is an essential property that facilitates contact with other people. Furthermore, being proficient at interpersonal relations contains some variables (Yuksel, 2001).

Akkok (1996: 2-3) has classified social skills in six groups. These are:

- *Skills for Initiating the Relationship and Continuing*: Listening, initiating and continuing the conversation, thanking, introducing oneself, complimenting, asking for help, apologizing, giving directions, persuading.

- *Skills for Teamwork*: Trying to understand views of other people, getting responsibility, transmitting complaints.

- *Feeling-Oriented Skills*: Understanding one's own feelings, expressing feelings, understanding the feelings of other people, coping with the anger of the other party, expressing positive feelings, coping with fear.

- *Skills for Coping with Aggressive Behaviors*: Asking for permission, sharing, helping other people, expressing anger appropriately and controlling it.

- *Skills for Coping with Stressful Situations*: Coping with the unsuccessful situations, coping with group pressure, coping with being left alone.

- *Skills for Problem Solving and Planning:* Collecting information from the environment, determining goals, concentrating on the work.

The child beginning his or her elementary education enters into a new social environment and peer groups before adolescence facilitates the transition period from reliable family life to independent adult life for the child by definite relationships (Kaymak et al., 2003). Since social skills increase the life quality of individuals, it can be seen as an important element for realizing themselves. It is the aim of social skill training programs to decrease negative social behaviors and increase positive social behaviors (Yildirim, 2006).

Social skills training aims to teach effective interpersonal skills and assumes that social behaviors are learned and can be taught by means of structured teaching methods. Social skills training is a process whereby behavioral methods are taught and applies a performance-based approach as an active individual or as a group (Hasdemir, 2005). Van Dam-Baggen and Kraimaat (2000) have explained the methods related to social skill training as following. Social skills training methods used in order to obtain basic and special social skills consist of taking as a model, behavior rehearsal, progressive approaches and homework (Hasdemir, 2005). Social skills training is crucially important and essential because many children cannot gain these basic skills on their own. Gaining these skills can be an effective element in their school achievement, social relations and adaptation difficulties. Social skills are expected to be learned randomly and developed by cognitive maturity (Karakus, 2006). Social skill training consists of six steps. The first step is defining the skill to be taught – why this skill is important and how this skill will be useful for an interaction to be made must be determined. In the second step, a model of the skill should be displayed to the child selected for the skill training. In the third step, the child should perform a similar skill within the formed situation. In the forth step, feedback should be provided for the child related to the training by an educator. In the fifth step, appropriate chances should be given within small group works or working groups of two students or within other natural atmospheres for the skill to be used. In the last step, behaviors by the child should be observed and reinforcements should be given for the gained behaviors (Avcioglu, 2005).

The goal of social skill training is to enable individuals to become aware of their feelings and thoughts and develop behaviors, giving opportunity for positive social interactions. In order to accomplish this, individuals are required to be able to

interpret social events, to become aware of their own feelings and other people's feelings and to apply various cognitive strategies as it is needed (Cartledge & Milburn, 1983).

The most important grades in which social skills training is applied intensely are those within elementary education. Elementary is an important level of formal education in which minimum and common basic knowledge and skills are taught, which are required of all citizens in the society. The elementary education process brings individuals to a level of fundamental competence for solving possible problems, adapting to social values and applying established social rules. In brief, knowing about the environment, having a vision of the world, making corresponding connections in a healthy way with the society in which they live, obtaining necessary information to use their rights of citizenship, and bringing individuals to fundamental knowledge and skills at a minimum level in the society are the important functions of elementary education (Cubukcu & Gultekin, 2006).

According to Bandura (1986), parents and teachers each serve as a good model and hold a respectful position in the eyes of children, especially at the elementary education level. Both can bring children to many desired behaviors. There are two important goals of elementary education: teaching students cognitive skills and developing necessary skills for a child to live in a society. Knowledge and skills gained in elementary education become the basis for knowledge and skills to be gained at other educational levels. For this reason, other educational levels are also based on the elementary level. Therefore, this fundamental educational level affects negatively or positively not only the education system of the society but also the other systems (Fidan, 1994:10). As a result, courses placed in the elementary education level play a role for desired results of these effects. Social Studies is the most important of these courses.

Social Studies, at the elementary education level, is a course closely related to the society in which the child lives. When children are able to understand the past, present and future of the society in which they live, they thereby gain and internalize the expectations and ideals of the society (Sozer, 1998: 15). Social expectations related to the characteristics of the Information Age can be gained by children through Social Studies lessons. When this course is organized in an educational environment where children have been confronted with social life dynamics and current world improvements, it can be provided to educate individuals who think independently, solve problems, look from different perspectives, and direct the dynamics according to the society's needs. Social Studies is an elementary course that aims to help an individual to achieve their social existence; reflects social sciences and citizenship knowledge such as history, geography, economy, sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, politics and law; includes the combination of learning areas under a unit or theme; examines interactions of individuals with their social and physical environments in terms of the past, today and the future; and is constructed according to the collective teaching understanding (Elementary Education, 4th & 5th Grade Social Studies Educational Program, 2005). The main goal of a Social Studies lesson given in the 4th and 5th grade is to create socialized students by teaching them important social skills and educating them to be good citizens (Erden, 1992:2). Teaching social behaviors to students, supporting them as they behave appropriately and motivating them have been found as the bases of efforts to develop social skills of

children such as expressing oneself, gaining self-confidence, forming relationships with people in their family and environment, being accepted by their friends, and gaining independence. For this reason, great effort is required for students to learn, reinforce and improve their social skills at each educational level. Teachers should give place to activities and arrangements that will enable students to gain these skills (Cubukcu & Gultekin, 2006). Teaching social skills and their sustainability can be achieved by repetition of these skills in family, school and other areas of living. Besides family, school and environment, learning social skills becomes permanent throughout time (McClelland & Morrison, 2003).

Due to the recent interest in this subject, the number of studies done about social skills of students has increased. Chung and Watkins (1995) took the social skill training program prepared according to the needs of students from Hong Kong and applied it to 60 students at the elementary education level. At the end of the training in which verbal and non-verbal skills, skills for transferring ideas, behavioral methods, problem solving skills, relaxing skills and enterprising skills have been used, they stated that the study carried out had been effective in the development of self-respect in students. Martin (2003) made a comparison between pre-school social skills programs and elementary education programs in his research. As a result, he emphasized that beginning social skills education during the pre-school period would develop social skills and peer acceptance. Hatipoglu (1999) conducted research about the effect of social skills education on perceived social skills aspects and the sociometric status of students at the elementary education level. At the end of the research, it was stated that academic, feeling, enterprising and conflict management aspects of social skills had been perceived as common aspects by students, teachers and parents. Studies conducted about social skills have asserted that a social skills education program at the elementary level can have a positive effect on the social adaptation level of students.

It is especially important for the students at the elementary education level to adapt to life throughout their social and emotional development. Some of the skills that students need to gain are social skills. While students develop, family, friends, school and other socializing sources gain these skills by direct or indirect effect. However, some students cannot gain these skills adequately, requiring direct interference in order to learn these skills. It is therefore necessary to determine what kinds of skills that students are deficient in, primarily in the studies about social skills. Within this context, this research seeks to establish its importance.

Objective and Research Questions

The aim of this study is the evaluation of teaching social skills in social studies lessons according to the perception of 5th grade teachers. Within the framework of this basic objective, the following questions will be answered:

1. What is the level of teaching social skills in social studies lessons according to the perceptions of teachers?

2. Is there any significant difference related to gender in the effectiveness of teaching social skills in social studies lessons according to the perceptions of teachers?

3. Does participation in in-service training affect the effectiveness of teaching social skills in social studies lessons according to the perceptions of teachers?

4. According to the perceptions of teachers, is there any relationship between the effectiveness of teaching social skills in social studies lessons in terms of:

   a. Gender and participation level in in-service training
   b. Educational status, occupational seniority and place of work

5. According to the perceptions of teachers, is there any significant difference in the effectiveness of teaching social skills in social studies lessons related to the teacher's

   a. Educational status
   b. Occupational seniority

Method

The survey model has been used in this research, which is a descriptive study. This method is used in the researches that try to describe and explain events, objects, existences, institutions, groups and various areas (Kaptan, 1991).

In this research, teachers of 5th grade classes who are working in elementary education schools in the Canakkale province during the 2008-2009 academic year have been interviewed and a measuring instrument has been formed. In addition, an attempt has been made to state and describe the existing situation based on the theoretical framework of conceptual structure within the context of the objective and limitations of the research by searching the literature widely.

Research Participants

The scope of the research consists of 5th grade teachers working in elementary education schools in the district centers, villages and city center of Canakkale province. Since it is difficult to reach the broad scope of the research, a sample was selected from the scope randomly and 150 5th grade teachers from the city center, district centre and villages in Canakkale province have been chosen. The multi-stage sampling method has been used in selecting the sample (Erdogan, 1988). The aim of using this method was to represent the entire scope and to control factors thought to affect the results as much as possible.

The sample selection for the method used in the research has been based on possibility calculation. Since the selection completely depends on randomization, it has been assumed that the selected sample represented the whole amount in a high degree. In other words, deviations to be able to exist somehow in the elements placed in the sample will eliminate each other because the elements are in the adequate size and, as a result, a sample having the least deviation possibility will be obtained (Seyidoglu, 1995).

Table.1

Personal Qualifications of Teachers in the Sample

	QUALIFICATIONS	f	%
Gender			
	Female	85	56,7
	Male	65	43,3
	Total	150	
Occupational Seniority			
	0-5 year(s)	20	13,3
	6-10 years	20	13,3
	11-15 years	30	20,0
	16-20 years	65	43,3
	21 years and above	15	10,0
	Total	150	
Educational Status			
	Associate degree	50	33,3
	Undergraduate	80	53,3
	Graduate	10	6,7
	Other	10	6,7
	Total	150	
In-Service Training			
	Yes	100	66,7
	No	50	33,3
	Total	**150**	
Place of the Work			
	Province	70	46,7
	District	40	26,7
	Village	40	26,7
	Total	150	

As can be seen from Table 1, more than half of the teachers (56.7%) consist of female teachers and the rest of them (43.3%) are male. In terms of occupational seniority, it can be seen that 13.3% of teachers have been working for 0-5 year(s), 13.3% for 6-10 years, 20.0% for 11-15 years, 43.3% for 16-20 years and 10.0% for 21 years or more. It can be seen that most of the teachers (66.7%) have participated in in-service training and the rest (33.3%) have not participated. It has been stated that 33.3% of 5th grade teachers have Associate degrees, 55.3% of them have undergraduate degrees, 6.7% have graduate degrees and 6.7% of them have other educational degrees (e.g. teacher training school, etc.). Regarding their places of work, 46.7% of them work in the city center, 26.7% work in the district center and 26.7% work in the village.

Data Collection

A scale has been used in the research as a measurement tool. The scale has been developed by the researcher. Firstly, the literature has been scanned during the process of scale development. Benefiting from the Elementary Education 5th Grade Social Studies Curriculum, in addition to the works written about social skills, items for each social skill aspect have been composed. The draft scale prepared examined three linguists, three pedagogy experts and a group of 100 teachers in terms of context and expressing and necessary changes have been made in accordance with their suggestions. A Likert-type scale has been formed by 10 expressions for each aspect. There are answers for which teachers can reflect their thoughts related to that

expression as "I definitely agree", "I agree", I partially agree", "I disagree" and "I definitely disagree", regarding each expression. The sentences for each aspect have been composed of positive expressions. The expressions have been graded as 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1.

The reliability and validity properties of the measurement tool have been determined so that the desired level for that gathered data reflects the truth. Being in the desired level in terms of stated properties of the measurement tool is possible by means of development. For this reason, before the measurement tool is not applied to collect data, they state that it will be developed by taking the opinions of the experts in the subject area and making an application to another group that is similar to the sampling group (Baykul, Gelbal ve Kelecioglu, 2001).

At the end of this study, a draft teacher scale that includes the qualifications relating to personal information and the issue has been prepared. With each question sentence, the alternatives of "I definitely agree", "I agree", I partially agree", "I disagree" and "I definitely disagree" have been placed. In the research, the method with co-forms has been used. For this reason, "Spearman Brown Correlation Coefficient", "Kuder Richardson Formula" and "Cronbach Alpha Coefficient" have been used in the reliability calculations. The reliability of the survey has been tested by Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. The researchers state that it is sufficient as a measurement tool to be stated as reliable if the Alpha value is between 0.50-0.70 (Baykul, Gelbal & Kelecioglu, 2001:53; Sencer & Irmak, 1984). In the research, the value of Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the measurement tool according to its aspects has been seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Reliability Coefficient

Aspects	p value
Communication and Empathy Skills	0.93
Enterprising Skills	0.92
Observation Skills	0.90
Skills of Perceiving Change and Sustainability	0.93
Social Participation Skills	0.89
Whole Survey	0.91

Data Analysis

After the application period of data collection tools has been completed, the answering papers have been controlled and the papers having missing information have been cancelled and taken out of evaluation. Data obtained at the end of scales applied to 5th grade teachers have been examined individually by means of computer and they have been transferred to the SPSS (Statistic Program for Social Sciences) program.

In the first step of evaluation, the views of teachers within the context of the research have been categorized individually based on the items they marked as "I definitely agree", "I agree", I partially agree", "I disagree" and "I definitely disagree";

then, their arithmetic means have been calculated. After that, the views of parties have been categorized according to the 5-point Likert-type Rating Scale. This evaluation has been rated as "very poor" for points between 1-1.49, "poor" for 1.50-2.49 points, "partially poor" for 2.50-3.49 points, "adequate" for 3.50-4.49 points, and "very efficient" for 4.50-5.00 points. In addition, "r-test", "F-test" and "t-test" have been applied with respect to variables.

Findings and Interpretation

Table.3

Findings Related to the Levels of Brining in Social Skills according to the Perceptions of Teachers

Aspect	Mean ($\overline{X}$)	Standard Deviation (Sd)	Level
Communication and Empathy Skills	3,7807	,4578	Adequate
Enterprising Skills	3,7800	,5192	Adequate
Observation Skills	3,6847	,4806	Adequate
Skills of Perceiving Change and Sustainability	3,6427	,5520	Adequate
Social Participation Skills	3,6810	,4671	Adequate

The views related to the social skills levels according to the 5th grade teachers have been given in Table 2. As a result, students' skills of communication and developing empathy, enterprising, observation, perceiving change and sustainability and social participation have been determined as in the adequate level according to the perceptions of the teacher.

Table 4

Findings related to whether there are any significant differences related to gender in the effectiveness of teaching social skills in social studies lessons according to the perceptions of teachers

Aspect	Gender	N	$\overline{X}$	Sd	sd	t	p
Communication and Empathy Skills	Female	85	3,7694	,4593	148	-,343	,908
	Male	65	3,7954	,4591			
Enterprising Skills	Female	85	3,8235	,5081	148	1,176	,573
	Male	65	3,7231	,5318			
Observation Skills	Female	85	3,6459	,4283	148	-1,131	,462
	Male	65	3,7354	,5407			
Skills for Perceiving Change and Sustainability	Female	85	3,6612	,5363	148	,468	,395
	Male	65	3,6185	,5752			
Social Participation Skills	Female	85	3,6471	,4445	148	-1,016	,379
	Male	65	3,7253	,4951			

It has been seen that the communication and empathy developing skill has not led to any significant difference within the gender variable from Table 4 [t$^{(148)}$= -3,43, p>0,05]. The level of teaching communication and empathy developing skills of female teachers ($\overline{X}$=3,7694) and the level of teaching communication and empathy developing skills of male teachers have rather similar values and there has been no significant difference between them. However, it can be said that male teachers teach more communication and empathy developing skills compared to female teachers. As the change of enterprising skills according to gender has been examined, it can be said that there has been again no significant difference [t(1,176)=,573, p>0,05]. The level of teaching enterprising skills by female teachers ($\overline{X}$=3,8235) and the level of teaching enterprising skills by male teachers ($\overline{X}$=3,7231) are close to each other and there has been no significant difference noted. However, the level of teaching enterprising skill by female teachers is better compared to the level of teaching enterprising skill by male teachers. As Table 3 demonstrates, it can be seen that the observation skill has not formed a significant difference according to the gender variable [t$^{(-1,131)}$=,462, p>0,05]. When we look at the views of male and female teachers, the level of teaching observation skills by male teachers ($\overline{X}$=3,7354) has been found to be more positive compared to that of female teachers ($\overline{X}$=3,6459). In the difference of the skill of perceiving change and sustainability according to gender variable, it has been seen that there is not any significant difference between them [t$^{(,468)}$=,395, p>0,05]. Opposite to that, there has been no significant difference between the views of female and male teachers; it can be said that the degree of teaching the skill of perceiving change and sustainability by female teachers ($\overline{X}$=3,6471) is higher than that of male teachers ($\overline{X}$=3,6185). When we think that female teachers are open to change and innovations in their own life, such a result is an expected one. As teachers' level of teaching social participation skills have been examined according to the gender variable, there has been no significant difference between female and male teachers [t$^{(-1,016)}$=,379, p>0,05]. However, the level of teaching social participation skills by male teachers ($\overline{X}$=3,7253) has been seen as higher compared to the level of teaching social participation skills by female teachers ($\overline{X}$=3,6471). On the other hand, this difference between them is not on a level to create a statistically significant difference.

Table 5

Findings related to whether participation in in-service training affects the effectiveness of teaching social skills in social studies lessons according to the perceptions of teachers

Aspect	Service-in Training	N	$\overline{X}$	Sd	sd	t	p
Communication and Empathy Skills	Yes	100	3,8050	,4620	148	,920	,493
	No	50	3,7320	,4501			
Enterprising Skills	Yes	100	3,8300	,5005	148	1,678	,298
	No	50	3,6800	,5460			
Observation Skills	Yes	100	3,6310	,4320	148	-1,952	,250
	No	50	3,7920	,5547			
Skills of Perceiving Change and Sustainability	Yes	100	3,7020	,5382	148	1,877	,558
	No	50	3,5240	,5655			
Social Participation Skills	Yes	100	3,6857	,4603	148	,176	,942
	No	50	3,6714	,4849			

According to Table 5, it has been seen that the skill of communication and empathy developing has not formed a significant difference according to the variable of participation in in-service trainings [$t^{(148)}$ = -,920, p>0,05]. The level of teaching the skill of communication and empathy developing by teachers who participated in in-service training ($\overline{X}$=3,8050) and the level of teaching the skill of communication and empathy developing by teachers who did not participate in in-service training ($\overline{X}$=3,7320) have rather similar values and there has been no significant difference noted between them. However, it can be said that the teachers taking the in-service training have better taught the skill of communication and empathy developing compared to ones who did not take the training. As a result of this, it can be agreed that in-service training activities are useful for teachers, at least with respect to teaching the skill of communication and empathy developing.

When the difference of enterprising skills has been examined according to the participation in in-service training variable, it can be said that there has been, again, no significant difference [$t^{(1,678)}$ = ,298, p>0,05]. The level of teaching enterprising skills by teachers who participated in in-service training ($\overline{X}$=3,8300) and the level of teaching enterprising skills by teachers who did not participate in in-service training ($\overline{X}$=3,6800) are close to each other and there has been no significant difference between them. Yet, the level of teaching enterprising skills by teachers who participated in in-service training has a more positive result compared to the level of teaching enterprising skills by teachers who did not participate in in-service training. As the in-service training activities increase the entrepreneurship of teachers, such a result is an expected situation.

When we examine Table 4, it has been found that there has also been no significant difference for the observation skill according to the variable of participation in in-service training [t $^{(-1,952)}$ =,250, p>0,05]. According to the views of teachers both taking in-service training and not taking in-service training, the level of teaching observation skills by teachers who took in-service training ($\overline{X}$ =3,6310) has been found to be less than the level of teaching observation skills by teachers who did not take in-service training ($\overline{X}$ =3,7920). The reason for that can be said to be that in-service training activities do not help developing teachers' ability to teach observation skills and the activities are not so effective toward that end-goal. As the difference of the skill of perceiving change and sustainability according to the variable of participation in in-service training has been examined, it has been seen that there has been no significant difference between them [t $^{(1,877)}$ = ,558, p>0,05].

Although there has not been any significant difference between teachers who took in-service training and those who did not take in-service training, it can be said that the skill of teaching change and sustainability by teachers who took in-service training ($\overline{X}$ =3,7020) is at a higher level compared to the teachers who did not take in-service training ($\overline{X}$ =3,5240).

When we consider that teachers taking in-service training follow changes and innovations in their own life, as well, it is an expected result that their level of teaching this skill has been found to be high. As the differences between the levels of effectively teaching social participation skills by teachers according to the variable of participation in in-service training have been examined, there has been no significant difference between them [t $^{(,176)}$ = ,942, p>0,05]. However, it has been seen that the level of teaching social participation skills by teachers who took in-service training ($\overline{X}$ =3,6857) is at a higher level compared to the level of teaching social participation skills by teachers who did not take in-service training ($\overline{X}$ =3,6714). On the other hand, this noted difference is not at a level that creates a statistically significant difference.

Table 6
Relationships between gender and participation rate for in-service training according to the perceptions of teachers

		Communication and Empathy Skills	Enterprising Skills	Observation Skills	Skills of Perceiving Change and Sustainability	Social Participation Skills
Gender	Pearson	,28	-,096	,093	-,038	,083
	p	,732	,242	,260	,640	,311
	N	150	150	150	150	150
Service-in Training	Pearson	-,075	-,137	,158	-,153	-0,14
	p	,359	,095	,053	,062	,861
	N	150	150	150	150	150

*Correlation is significant at .05 level.
** Correlation is significant at .01 level.

The relationships between gender and participation rates for in-service training of 5th grade teachers and their ability to teach students in social skills using social studies lessons have been seen in Table 6. In accordance with this, it has been determined that there has not been any significant relationship between gender and participation rates for in-service training and teachers' ability to teach students in sub-aspects of social skills. However, there exists a negative relationship ($p < 0.05$, r-,096), at least, between the gender of teachers and the ability to teach the enterprising skill, which is a sub-aspect of social skills. In other words, it can be said that the gender of the teacher is less affective compared to other aspects in terms of developing enterprising skills of students. In addition, there exists a negative relationship ($p < 0.05$, r-,153), at least, between the variable of participation in in-service training and the skill of perceiving changes and sustainability, which is a sub-aspect of social skills.

Table 7
Relationships between educational status, occupational seniority and place of work according to the perceptions of teachers

		Communication and Empathy Skills	Enterprising Skills	Observation Skills	Skills of Perceiving Change and Sustainability	Social Participation Skills
Educational Status	Pearson p N	-,041 ,614 150	-,101 ,221 150	-,007 ,932 150	-,141 ,086 150	,029 ,727 150
Occupational Seniority	Pearson p N	,000 ,997 150	-,093 ,264 150	-,018 ,826 150	-,102 ,215 150	,009 ,915 150
Place of Work	Pearson p N	-,065 ,432 150	-,121 ,140 150	,089 ,277 150	-,179(*) ,028 150	-,020 ,811 150

*Correlation is significant at .05 level.
** Correlation is significant at .01 level.

The relationships between educational status, occupational seniority and place of work for 5th grade teachers and their ability to teach students in social skills using social studies lessons, according to their perceptions, can be seen from Table 7. It has been determined that there is no significant relationship between educational status and occupational seniority of teachers and their ability to teach students in sub-aspects of social skills. However, there exists a negative relationship ($p < 0.05$, r-,179), at least, between teachers' place of work and the skill of perceiving changes and sustainability, which is a sub-aspect of social skills. In other words, it can be said that teachers' place of work is less affective compared to other aspects in terms of developing the skill of perceiving changes and sustainability for students. In addition, it has been seen that there exists a negative relationship ($p < 0.05$, r-,093), at least, between teachers' occupational seniority and the enterprising skill, which is a sub-aspect of social skills. According to this result, it can be said that teachers' occupational seniority is less affective compared to other aspects with respect to

teaching students about enterprising skills. Besides, there exists a negative relationship (p<0.05, r-,141), at least, between teachers' educational status and the skill of perceiving changes and sustainability, which is a sub-aspect of social skills.

Table 8
Findings related to the difference between educational status and the levels of teaching social skills using social studies lessons according to the perceptions of teachers

Educational Status			N	$\overline{X}$	Ss
Associate degree			50	3,7379	,3638
Undergraduate			80	3,7192	,3580
Graduate			10	3,6009	,4129
Other			10	3,6633	,5173
Total			150	3,7138	,3731
Variation Analysis	**Total of Squares**	**Degree of Freedom**	**Mean of Squares**	**F Value**	**Significance Level**
Between-Groups	,184	3	6,141	,436	,727
Within-Group	20,554	146	,141		
Total Squares	20,738	149			

p>0.05

In Table 8, the results have been placed based on whether there is a significant difference between teachers' ability to teach social skills using social studies lessons and their educational status, according to the perceptions of teachers and as controlled by the F-test. As Table 7 is examined, it can be seen that there is no significant difference between the levels of teaching social skills using social studies lessons by teachers and their educational status [$F^{(3-146)}$ = ,436, p>0,05)]. When the answers given by teachers related to the questions to determine their levels of teaching social skills using social studies lessons, it can be seen that the values related to their levels are similar to each other, but the group of teachers that has the highest level of teaching social skills are the teachers who have an associate degrees ($\overline{X}$ =3,7379). Although there has not been any significant difference between the levels of teachers having undergraduate degrees ($\overline{X}$ =3,7192), the levels of teachers having graduate degrees ($\overline{X}$ =3,6009) and the levels of teachers who have graduated from other types of schools ($\overline{X}$ =3,6633), it has been found that the level of teaching social skills by teachers having associate degrees is higher.

Table 9

Findings related to the difference between occupational seniority and the levels of teaching social skills using social studies lessons according to the perceptions of teachers

Occupational Seniority			N	$\overline{X}$	Ss
1-5 year(s)			20	3,6556	,3678
6-10 years			20	3,8454	,3294
11-15 years			30	3,7181	,3969
16-20 years			65	3,7201	,3559
21 years and above			15	3,5798	,4425
Total			150	3,7138	,3731
Variation Analysis	**Total of Squares**	**Degree of Freedom**	**Mean of Squares**	**F Value**	**Significance Level**
Between-Groups	,687	4	,172	1,241	,296
Within-Group	20,051	145	,138		
Total Squares	20,738	149			

p>0.05

According to the results from Table 9, it can be seen that there is no significant difference in terms of the levels of teaching social skills using social studies lessons by teachers and their service life [$F^{(4-145)}$=1,241, p>0,05)]. As the levels of teaching social skills using social studies lessons by teachers have been examined, it can be seen that the values are close to each other, while the ones that have the most positive approach are the teachers having a seniority of 6-10 years ($\overline{X}$ =3,8454). Even though there has been no significant difference between the levels of teachers having a seniority of 1-5 year(s) ($\overline{X}$ =3,6556), the levels of teachers having a seniority of 11-15 years ($\overline{X}$ =3,7181), the levels of teachers having a seniority of 16-20 years ($\overline{X}$ =3,7201) and the levels of teachers having a seniority of 20 years and above ($\overline{X}$ =3,5798), it has been found that the teachers having a seniority of 16-20 years are more effective in teaching social skills. The least effective teacher group is composed of the teachers having a seniority of 21 years and above ($\overline{X}$ =3,5798).

Discussion

Data obtained from the research examined related to the ability to teach social skills using social studies lessons according to the perceptions of 5th grade teachers have corresponded to many bodies of research related to the subject. On the other hand, some of the similar researches in respect to this issue have not overlapped with the results of this study.

According to the views of 5th grade teachers, it can be seen that they are in the "adequate" level in terms of teaching students about social skills. However, the reason that the skill of perceiving change and sustainability has achieved proficiency at a

lower level than other skills can be related to the fact that teachers do not know much about the social environment, family and cultural properties of students and do not have an approach that takes into consideration the personal qualifications of students.

No significant difference has been found between communication and empathy, enterprising, observation, perceiving change and sustainability and social participation skills in respect to the levels of teaching social skills using social studies lessons and the gender of the teacher and participation in in-service training according to the perceptions of teachers. It can be said that in-service training developed the social participation skills of teachers and, therefore, the teachers who attended in-service trainings are more effective at teaching students about social skills. This finding obtained from the study supports the finding that female teachers perform more social skills than male teachers – a finding obtained by Jamyang-Tshering (2004), Kazdin (1985) and Raine, (1993). However, no significant relationship has been found between gender and participation rate in in-service training and the ability to teach students in sub-aspects of social skills. This obtained finding has been seen as opposite to the findings of Phillipsen, Bridges, McLemare and Saponora (1999). However, results of Anderson, Carnavey and Eubanks (2003) have parallelism with the findings of Huesman, Moise-Titus, Podolski and Eron (2003). There may have been several reasons for the fact that female teachers' social skill grades are less than those of male teachers'. When we look at the effect of the gender variable, opposite to the literature, it has been determined that the rate of teaching students about social skills by female teachers is higher than that of male teachers. This finding has been seen as the opposite of the findings of Phillipsen, Bridges, McLemare, and Saponora (1999). On the other hand, the results have parallelism with the findings of Anderson, Carnavey and Eubanks (2003) and Huesman, Moise-Titus, Podolski and Eron (2003). These stated that there have been many reasons that social skills are taught at higher levels by female teachers compared to male teachers. For example, some female teachers are more successful in terms of communication and empathy skills.

According to the findings obtained as a result of relationships between educational status, occupational seniority and place of work and teaching students about social skills during social studies lessons according to the perceptions of teachers, no significant relationship has been found between educational status and occupational seniority of teachers and their ability to teach students in sub-aspects of social skills. As the views of the teachers have been examined generally, it can be seen that they have been thinking similarly to each other; however, teachers having a 1-5-year seniority and those having 21-year and above seniority are less effective in teaching students about social skills using social studies lessons compared to the teachers having other seniorities. Although the result is an expected situation when the lack of experience of teachers having 1-5-year seniority is taken into account, it is a surprising situation that the levels of teachers having 21-year and above seniority have been found as low. The reason for this can be posed that teachers having much occupational seniority have not improved themselves with respect to change and innovations, and due to their ages, their approaches related to the development of social skills of students have been affected in a negative way. However, there exists a negative relationship (p<0.05, r-,179), even though it is low, between the place of work and skill of perceiving change and sustainability, which is a sub-aspect of social skills. In other words, it can be said that the teacher's place of work is less affective compared to the other aspects in terms of developing the skill of perceiving change

and sustainability of students. According to the obtained finding, the related elements composing social skills makes it necessary for teachers to have the variables comprising social skills as a whole. Having one or more of these variables is not enough to effectively teach social skills. For example, a teacher can express him/herself and manage the class, but if s/he is not sensitive, s/he will have an inadequate performance with respect to understanding students (Riggio, 1986). This can prevent teachers from achieving some objectives planned related to teaching. Students may not want to listen to a lesson from a teacher who does not and/or cannot listen themselves. A teacher can be expressive and sensitive, but if s/he does not possess controlling skills, s/he can become angry easily with ignorable and negligible events and give reactions that put him/her in a difficult position. However, they can avoid such negative reactions by means of having affective and social controlling skills. In other words, a teacher needs to have skills of expressing, being sensitive and controlling in terms of social and affective aspects. It is considered incompetence to have some of these skills, while not having others.

As a result, it can be said that teachers' ability to teach students about skills of communication and empathy, enterprising, observation, perceiving change and sustainability and social participation are important contributions for students' academic achievement with respect to teaching students in social skills using social studies lessons, according to teachers' perceptions. When we consider that teaching students about social skills will take a rather long period of time, applications related to social skills in the lessons should be organized by taking the orientation periods into account. Teachers should incorporate the aspects comprising social skills as a whole. Planning can be made such as to bring teacher candidates in the teacher training institutions and teachers in the in-service training programs; furthermore, courses can be created regarding teaching social skills in accordance with these programs. Behaviors related to social skills within the context of courses placed in other programs of faculties of education can be examined and studies directed to different aspects of social skills can be done. This situation has increased the necessity for the studies researching the effect of the objectives of social skills in cognitive, affective and psycho-motor domains.

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Miscellany

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International Journal of Progressive Education (IJPE) (ISSN 1554-5210) is a peer reviewed interactive electronic journal sponsored by the International Association of Educators and in part by the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. IJPE is a core partner of the Community Informatics Initiative and a major user/developer of the Community Inquiry Laboratories. IJPE takes an interdisciplinary approach to its general aim of promoting an open and continuing dialogue about the current educational issues and future conceptions of educational theory and practice in an international context. In order to achieve that aim, IJPE seeks to publish thoughtful articles that present empirical research, theoretical statements, and philosophical arguments on the issues of educational theory, policy, and practice. IJPE is published three times a year in four different languages; Chinese, Turkish, Spanish and English.

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