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Secondary School Teachers' Beliefs On Character Education Competency

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Abstract

Character education competencies of teachers are very important in the achievement of educational objectives in addition to their field knowledge, general knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. The study which utilized survey model aimed to identify competencies in teachers, who play a significant role in shaping the character of students along with the parents, through self assessment. Data was collected with the help of CECBS (Character Education Competency Belief Scale) developed by Milson & Ekşi (2003). Working group of the study was composed of 231 teachers employed in various provinces of Turkey. Results showed that teachers' beliefs on character education competency centered on "agree" on CEC (Character Education Competency) and GEC (General Education Competency) dimensions; variables such as gender, type of school teachers graduated from, type of settlement they work in, income levels of their students and seniority did not create a significant difference on their character education competency beliefs however the subject they teach, attending in-service seminars and reading books about character education were found be significant. In the contenxt of the findings; increasing the number of in-service training opportunities and the number of publications are suggested.

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Keywords: Character education, teacher competeceny, Character education competeceny

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1. Introduction

In the development of societies, the importance of the quality of individuals who compose the society is increasing day by day. The objective of creating a society of qualified and competent individuals through education has recently been in the agenda of teaching programs in Turkey. Parallel to the development in teaching programs, the studies in the field of teacher competencies are also increasing (Huntly,2008; Bellm,2008; Demirel,2009; Selvi,2010).

The children and the youth who will ensure the continuity of the society should have good characters in addition to knowledge. Qualified and well trained individuals equipped with positive values are required to create serene, content and successful societies and therefore more resources are provided in Turkey to educate qualified and competent individuals (MEB, 2012:208). Acquisition of positive character attributes in schools in addition to field knowledge is possible through values included (MEB, 2004;2006;2009).

Teachers who implement teaching programs should be competent both in their fields and in character education in order to educate a qualified generation. Teacher model of the past mostly engaged in transferring knowledge is replaced by the teacher model that is student and learning centered and aware of all students in the classroom and engaged in preparing learning experiences suitable for development and individual differences of all students (Tanrikulu, 2008:57). As emphasized by Ersoy (2008:33); anyone with knowledge about a topic cannot just transfer it to another person. So effective teaching does not only include knowledge but methods and required teacher competences to transfer the knowledge to students. Self efficacy or competence is defined as one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations (Bandura, 1977 cited in Aypay, 2010:118). According to De Bueger & Vander Borgh; (1996) the concept of competence defined as being qualified to undertake a task or activity requires knowledge, generation of knowledge production and the use of knowledge that is generated (Cited in:Naumescu, 2008:26-27). The fact that teacher competences are not independent of personal judgments and are closely related to intent, motivation and attitudes brings questioning of those competencies (So, Cheng & Tsang, 1996:46).

The majority of teacher competencies are acquired during teacher training periods (in faculties of education) and developed by implementations in schools. The theoretical foundation of the competency concept is based on Rotter's (1966) Control of Locus Theory and Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory. This concept is also related to Reddin's (1970) 3D theory which is a situational leadership theory (Baloglu & Karadağ, 2008:571). There are studies about personal and general self competency areas of teachers that aim to explain the concept of self competence (Aypay, 2011; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Şahinkaya, 2008). In addition to these areas, there are also classifications at the level of implementation such as level of internship, level of entrance, level of experience and level of expertise (Royce, 1999). Additionally, there is also personal competence that consists of competences such as self consciousness, adaptation and motivation as well as "social competence" consisting thirteen affective competences such as empathy, social skills etc that determine success in interpersonal relations (Ada, 2009:37-44).

There is a directly proportional relationship between self competence and achievement therefore teachers should have high levels of self competence (Tanrikulu, 2008:36). Teachers with high levels of competence have the following characteristics: They provide more effort to teach, they have more willing and passionate about teaching they take important educational decisions faster and more explicitly, they are more successful in implementing educational programs and less stressed compared to other teachers they are more inclined to use new ideas and teaching methods, they are less critical of student errors (Şahinkaya, 2008:13).

National Education Basic Statue states that students need to be provided with positive character attributes in schools in addition to knowledge and skills (MEB,1973). As can be seen in the fundamental objectives of the National Education, it is required to "educate individuals who internalize basic humanitarian values" in addition to academic achievement and this task is one of the major targets of the family, society and the school (Ekşi, 2003:79). The concept of character, which is an abstract notion in itself (Ryan & Bohlin,1999:5), is defined as the sum of features and qualities that distinguish someone or something from the others; personal attitudes and good qualities (Afdal,2007:349). Character can be acquired later in life. Teachers have the biggest responsibility in students' internalizing positive character traits. The roles of the teachers in character education are as follows (Hayes & Hagerdon, 2000:2; Lickona, 1993:7-8): Teachers behave with affection and respect to the students, provide a good role model and support positive social behaviors, they inform students about how to behave respectfully to others and ensure implementation of affection and responsibility towards peers in groups, they provide discipline with moral

rules that develop reasoning and are followed in a voluntary manner, they allow students to make decisions in the class and make the classroom a better place thereby creating a democratic environment, they place emphasis on values in the lesson programs required to be transmitted to students, they use cooperative learning approaches in order to develop students, they work to develop awareness for hand crafts, they strive for having student learning to be acknowledged and developed, they promote moral thinking in reading, doing research and writing, they work on conflict mediation.

Implementing the above mentioned character education activities is directly related to the character education competence of the teachers (Milson & Ekşi, 2003). Therefore it is imperative to identify teachers' competencies in character education in order to make policies regarding the efficiency of character education currently provided in schools. Since the attributes are among the competences that hard to be evaluated because they are not concrete and some personal variations are possible (Tanrikulu, 2008:32), studies previously undertaken in the same field show that teachers' beliefs on character education competences can be assessed (Milson & Ekşi, 2003). Therefore, the current study aimed to identify the character education competency of teachers who work teach different subjects.

2. Method

The research questions developed according to the purpose of the study and the design regarding how the answers would be analyzed are given below:

Table 1. Research Design

Research Questions	Data Collection Tools	Data Analysis Technique
1. What are the beliefs and perceptions of teachers regarding character education competencies in CEC and GEC dimensions?	Survey form	Average
2. Do teacher perceptions regarding character education competencies in CEC and GEC dimensions change according to:		
a. gender,	Survey form	t - Test
b. type of school type graduate from,		
c. attendance in in-service training		
d. subjects they teach ,		
e. seniority ,	Survey form	ANOVA,
f. reading books on character education?		(Bonferonni)

The research utilized the survey model, a descriptive research method, in order to assess teacher perceptions regarding character education (Karasar, 2002).

a. Working Group: Working group of the study was composed of 231 teachers employed in various provinces of Turkey. Three of these teachers had to be removed from the data set due to lack of information provided by them therefore data for 228 teachers were included in the analysis. Research participants were selected from secondary schools formative/master subject teachers who participated in no 1375-1380 in-service training provided by MoNE between the dates of 24 and 28 October 2011.

b. Data Collection Tool: Data of the study was collected with the help of CECBS (Character Education Competency Belief Scale) developed by Milson & Ekşi (2003). Reliability coefficient of the scale (Cronbach Alpha) was found as 0,74. The scale is composed of two dimensions: Character Education Competency (CEC) and General Education Competency (GEC) dimensions. The 5 point Likert type scale (completely agree, agree, undecided, disagree and completely disagree) consists of 24 items. Reverse coding was used in the negative statements in the scale.

c. Statistical Techniques Used in the Study: Analysis of averages was undertaken by Range/Number of Groups" formula and score intervals were calculated to be $4/5=0,80$ (Tekin, 1996).

Normal distribution of the data and their homogeneity were taken into account to make decisions about the inferential analysis methods used in the study. Kolmogorov Smirnov analysis was undertaken for normal

distribution and homogeneity analysis was undertaken for homogeneity and for both analysis, result of $p > 0,05$ were found. Large enough sample size allows parametric analysis methods to be implemented on the data.

3. Findings

This section provides the averages of teachers' CEC and GEC beliefs regarding CECBS dimensions and various analysis of these dimensions with several variables.

Table 2. Teacher Views Regarding CEC and GEC

Dimension	N	M	Sd
CEC	228	3,82	0,47
GEC	228	3,42	0,38

Results about teachers' total attitude scores regarding CEC and GEC dimensions show that although CEC attitudes were higher ($X=3,82$), teachers focused on "agree" for both dimensions.

Table 3. Relationship between CEC and GEC Dimensions and Gender

Dimension	Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	ss	Levene Test		sd	t	p
					F	p			
CEC	F	55	46,64	4,35	2,28	0,13	226	1,198	0,232
	M	173	45,60	5,95					
GEC	F	55	40,98	4,39	0,05	0,82	226	0,043	0,966
	M	173	41,01	4,55					

Teachers' attitudes regarding the CEC [$t_{(226)}=1,198$; $p>0,05$] and GEC [$t_{(226)}=0,043$; $p>0,05$] do not show changes according to gender.

Table 4. Relationship between CEC and GEC Dimensions and type of school teachers are graduated from

Dimension	Type of school	N	$\bar{x}$	ss	Levene Test		sd	t	p
					F	p			
CEC	Education	132	45,68	5,59	0,21	0,65	226	0,518	0,605
	Science-Literature	96	46,07	5,68					
GEC	Education	132	41,02	4,65	0,58	0,45	226	0,042	0,966
	Science-Literature	96	40,99	4,32					

Teachers' total attitude scores regarding CEC [$t_{(226)}=0,518$; $p>0,05$] and GEC [$t_{(226)}=0,042$; $p>0,05$] dimensions were not found to be diverse in terms of schools they graduated from.

Table 5. Relationship between CEC and GEC Dimensions and in-service training attendance

Dimension	Attendance	N	$\bar{x}$	ss	Levene Test		sd	t	p
					F	p			
CEC	Yes	50	48,44	5,06	0,18	0,67	226	3,802	0,000
	No	178	45,12	5,56					
GEC	Yes	50	42,66	4,70	0,42	0,52	226	2,994	0,003
	No	178	40,54	4,35					

A difference was identified in CEC and GEC dimensions in total attitude scores between teachers in terms of attending in-service training about character/value education. Total attitude scores of teachers who received in-

service training about character/value education was found to be $X=48,44$ in CEC dimension ; whereas total attitude scores of teachers who did not receive in-service training about character/value education was $X=45,12$. This difference was found to be statistically significant. [$t_{(226)}=3,802$; $p<0,05$]. Similarly, total attitude scores of teachers who received in-service training about character/value education was found to be $X=42,66$ in GEC, whereas total attitude scores of teachers who did not receive in-service training about character/value education was $X=40,54$. This difference was found to be statistically significant as well [$t_{(226)}=2,994$; $p<0,05$].

Table 6. Relationship between CEC and GEC Dimensions and subjects taught

<i>Dimensi on</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>N</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>ss</i>	<i>Varianc e Source</i>	<i>Sum of Squar es</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Difference</i>
CEC	History	45	48,76	5,15	Between groups	574,32	5	3,869	0,002	1-3 1-5 1-6
	Geography	30	46,27	4,29						
	Mathematics	29	43,76	6,76						
	Turkish language and literature	18	45,61	3,57	In-groups	6591,30	222			
	Physics	46	44,93	5,62						
	Chemistry	60	45,23	5,78						
GEC	History	45	42,76	4,79	Between groups	203,53	5	2,055	0,072	
	Geography	30	41,07	3,65						
	Mathematics	29	39,90	4,53						
	Turkish language and literature	18	40,39	4,05	In-groups	4397,47	222			
	Physics	46	40,30	4,76						
	Chemistry	60	70,92	4,38						

Table 6 shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the subjects taught and the total attitude scores regarding CEC [$F_{(5,222)}=3,869$; $p<0,05$] dimension. Bonferonni analysis was undertaken to identify which groups were affected by the difference and results show that there was significant difference between groups 1-3 (in favor of 1), 1-5 (in favor of 1) and 1-6 (in favor of 1). No significant relationships were identified between subject taught and total attitude scores in GEC dimension. [$F_{(5,222)}=2,055$; $p>0,05$].

Table 7. Relationship between CEC and GEC Dimensions and Seniority

<i>Dimensi on</i>	<i>Seniority Regarding</i>	<i>N</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>ss</i>	<i>Source of Variance</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
CEC	6-10 years	36	46,3 3	5,20	Between groups	24,632	3	0,258	0,856
	11-15 years	89	45,6 0	6,17					
	16-20 years	80	46,0 6	5,29	in-groups	7170,995	224		
	21 years or more	23	45,3 0	5,35					
GEC	6-10 years	36	40,7 5	4,85	Between groups	24,907	3	0,406	0,749
	11-15 years	89	40,8 7	4,74					
	16-20 years	80	41,0 0	4,15	in-groups	4576,089	224		
	21 years or more	23	41,9 6	4,35					

No significant difference was identified between total attitude scores and seniority regarding CEC [$F_{(3,224)}=0,258$; $p>0,05$] and GEC [$F_{(3,224)}=0,406$; $p>0,05$] dimensions.

Table 8. Relationship between CEC and GEC Dimensions and Reading

<i>Dimensi on</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>N</i>	$\bar{x}$	<i>ss</i>	<i>Source of Varianc e</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>sd</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Differenc e</i>
CEC	None	88	44,4 7	5,43	Between groups	490,994	3	5,493	0,001	1-4 2-4
	1-3	75	45,9 2	5,16						
	4-7	40	46,5 8	6,24	in- groups	6674,633	22 4			
	8 or more	25	49,3 2	5,10						
GEC	None	88	40,8 1	4,39	Between groups	86,598	3	1,432	0,234	
	1-3	75	40,7 7	4,48						
	4-7	40	40,7 8	5,16	in- groups	4514,398	22 4			
	8 or more	25	42,7 6	3,64						

Table 8 shows a statistically significant difference between reading books about character education and total attitude scores regarding CEC dimension [$F_{(3,224)}=5,493$; $p<0,05$]. Bonferonni analysis was undertaken to identify which groups were affected by the difference and results show that there was significant difference between groups 1-4 (in favor of 4), 1-4 (in favor of 4) and 2-4 (in favor of 4). No significant relationships were identified between subject taught and total attitude scores and in GEC dimension [$F_{(3,224)}=1,432$; $p>0,05$].

4. Results

The study presents important results regarding secondary school subject matter teachers' beliefs on character education competency. Teachers were found to center on "agree" option in CEC and GEC dimensions. Attitudes towards CEC were found to be higher compared to those regarding GEC. This result is compatible with the results of the study by Milson and Ekşi (2003) and that secondary school teachers have positive competency beliefs regarding character education. Secondary school teachers' beliefs on character education competency were not found to be statistically different according to gender, type of school they graduated from and seniority. These results are supported by other studies in the literature (Milson & Ekşi, 2003; Şahinkaya, 2008; Tanrıkulu, 2008; Demirel, 2009). However, Tanrıkulu's (2008) study that shows gender is related to differences in primary school teachers do not support our findings. The difference presented in Tanrıkulu's (2008) study may be related to B.A degree of the teachers and the age levels of their students. The fact that graduates of Faculty of Education were found to have higher averages in both dimensions (although there was no statistical difference) is an important issue that needs to be taken into consideration during teacher assignments and preferences.

A statistically significant difference was identified between secondary school teachers' beliefs on character education competency and their attending in-service training and reading books on character education. The statistical difference was found to be significant in favor of history teachers in CEC sub dimension of in-service training attendance. This finding was found to be related to the character education and values training in the framework of #435 in-service training provided for history teachers by MoNE in 2011. Results related to teachers' reading about character education showed that there was a significant difference in CEC sub dimension in favor of teachers who read 8 or more books. Accordingly, attending in-service training and reading books were found to positively affect and increase teachers' personal teaching competencies. These results also confirm the findings of Milson & Ekşi (2003) but not with the findings of Fholer (2002 cited in Tanrıkulu, 2008). This difference may be explained by the fact that studies about teacher competencies may change according to samples of the studies. Ersoy's study (2008) that points to the differences of teacher, administrator, inspector and student opinions regarding teacher competencies also shows how perception of competency changes.

In the context of Character Teaching Competence, scores of history and geography teachers, which is related with social sciences, are higher than other areas (language-literature, math and science). Those social studies teachers having more positive attitude scores than other branches can be explained that character education is considered as a social science and the teachers of this branch are to take a role for themselves. In this sense, it can be said that on character education, social studies teachers (especially history teachers), feels more competent than teachers in other areas (especially math and science), have a favorable opinion and thoughts, and are interested in character education.

Suggestions that can be provided in line with these results are as follows: implementing in-service training about character education that is found to create differences on the beliefs regarding character education competency and distributing books in that field to schools should be given priority. The study should be replicated with different samples and teachers of subject matter to increase awareness in teachers about character education and to provide a comprehensive database for character education policy development. Preference should be given to teachers graduated from Faculty of Education in teacher assignments and teachers graduated from other fields should be provided preparatory education and training in character education.

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