Use Of Rewards In Special and General Education: Focus Group Interviews

Özel Eğitimde ve Genel Eğitimde Ödül Kullanımı: Odak Grup Görüşmeleri

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Özet

Bu çalışma, özel eğitim öğretmenleri ve sınıf öğretmenlerinin öğretim sürecinde ödül kullanımı ile ilgili düşünceleri ve uygulamalarını incelemek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Nitel bir araştırma olarak desenlenen çalışmada biri 13 özel eğitim öğretmeni, diğeri 13 sınıf öğretmeni ile olmak üzere iki ayrı odak grup görüşmesi yapılmıştır. İki grup öğretmene, öğrencilerin istendik davranışlarını arttırmada ve istenmeyen davranışlarını azaltmada kullandıkları yöntemler, özel gereksinimli öğrenciler için kullanılan yöntemlerin farklılaşıp farklılaşmadığı, ne sıklıkta ödül kullandıkları, öğretmenlerin ödül kullanımı ile ilgili farklılıklarının olası nedenleri ve üniversite/stajyerlik/formasyon eğitimleri sırasında ödül kullanımının nasıl ele alındığı ile ilgili sorular yöneltilmiştir. Veriler, içerik analizi tekniği kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, ödül kullanımı konusunda iki grup öğretmen arasında farklılıklar olduğunu ve bu farklılıkların kaynağı olarak iki grup öğretmenin aldıkları eğitimin ön plana çıktığını ortaya koymaktadır.

***Anahtar Kelimeler**: Ödül kullanımı, Odak grup görüşmesi, Özel eğitim öğretmeni, Sınıf öğretmeni*

Abstract

This study aimed to examine of special education and general education teachers' views and practices on the use of rewards in the teaching process. In this qualitative research two different focus group interviews were held with two groups of teachers respectively: 13 special education and 13 general education teachers. These teachers were posed questions related to the methods they used to increase terminal behaviors and decrease undesired behaviors, whether the methods they used for special education students differed, the frequency of using rewards, reasons behind use of rewards by teachers in different ways and how the use of rewards were addressed during their university/formation trainings and trainee program. Data were analyzed via content analysis technique. Results show that there are differences between these two groups in terms of rewards use and the cause of these differences were based on the trainings teachers had received.

***Keywords**: Using rewards, Focus group interview, Special education teacher, General education teacher*

1. Introduction

Behaviorist school argues that all behaviors are under the influence of environmental events which needed to be controlled to change behaviors. Environmental events that may emerge before or after the behavior have a strong impact on the display of behaviors (Tekin-İftar, 2014) and teaching takes place as a result of the consequences of the behavior (Alberto and Troutman, 2015). Individuals who encounter pleasing outcomes as a result of their behaviors tend to repeat this behavior to obtain the same outcome. Reinforcement process, defined as the addition of a pleasing stimulus to the environment or removal of a repulsive stimulus from the environment, is used to increase the probability and frequency of repeating the terminal behavior in the future (Tekin-İftar, 2014). The concept of reinforcement proposed by theorists such as Watson and Skinner was studied on human behaviors in the 60s. The first scientific studies on the concept addressed student behaviors desired to be transformed in the classroom environment and the impact of reinforcement on student achievement and study habits was investigated (Tekin-İftar, 2014). Reinforcement is still significant in educational environments and in shaping student behaviors.

Teachers make use of different techniques in shaping student behaviors. Several techniques are used such as modeling, guidance, interviewing students and imposing sanctions in educational environments. However, use of reinforcement or rewards is preferred more by teachers since it is positive, easy to use and its benefits are proven (Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers and Sugai, 2008). It is known that teachers can create more productive and eficient teaching environment in their classes by using rewards which are effective on all student behaviors, academic or social. Hence, use of rewards has a significant place in teacher training programs prepared to support effective teaching (Evertson, 1988; Polirstok and Gottlieb, 2006; Slider, Noell and Williams, 2006). Researchers emphasize the need for more reward use (such as approval) by teachers to increase desired academic or social behaviors and decrease inappropriate behaviors (Brophy, 2006; Landrum and Kauffman, 2006; Polirstok, 2015). Studies on the use of rewards show that the frequency of reward use by teachers is insufficient (Güner, 2012; Nafpaktitis, Mayer and Butterworth, 1985; Swinson and Harrop, 2001) and teachers tend to reward academic behaviors more compared to social behaviors (Chalk and Bizo, 2004; Harrop and Swinson, 2000). Although use of rewards is one of the techniques preferred by teachers, researchers state that teachers should utilize rewards more frequently and more effectively.

Studies on reward use conducted in Turkey focused on the frequency of reward use and the differences in the use of rewards for students with or without special needs. The first study conducted in the field (Çifci, Yıkmış and Akbaba-Altun, 2001) investigated the characteristics of rewards use in inclusion classrooms by teacher interviews and observations in classrooms. Results displayed that teachers did not generally rewarded students with special needs and they were not even aware of these students. In their study on special education teachers Çelik and Eratay (2007) investigated the use of reinforcers and punishment by primary school teachers working in inclusion classrooms with mentally retarded children with the help of semi-structured interviews and found that teachers did not have sufficient knowledge and skills in using reinforcers. In another study (Sucuoğlu, Demirtaşlı and Güner, 2009), obser-

vations were conducted in the classrooms of 201 teachers employing inclusion practices to identify the strategies used by teachers. According to the findings, only 27.36% of the teachers rewarded one or two academic or social behaviors of special needs students. In a study that examined teacher behaviors towards inclusion students in inclusion classrooms, it was found that only 20% of the 45 general education teachers rewarded inclusion students (Güner-Yıldız and Sazak-Pınar, 2012). Another study (Sazak-Pınar and Güner-Yıldız, 2013) reported teachers' use of academic rewards for students with normal developmental patters as an average of 0.42 in a minute. It was also identified that teachers displayed disapproval behaviors (reprimand, punishment) more frequently compared to approval behaviors (rewards) and that they noticed and responded to the behaviors of special needs students less often compared to the behaviors of their peers with normal developmental patterns. The last study related to the topic (Güner-Yıldız, 2015) identified that teachers used rewards for special needs students in their classrooms only in 0.13% of the time they were observed. Parallel to studies abroad, studies in Turkey also display that teacher behaviors related to reward use were inadequate. Also, previous studies in the field mostly focused on the behaviors of general education teachers towards students with special needs or investigated the differences between teacher behaviors towards students with normal developmental patterns and students with special needs. While students with special needs can be taught in general education classrooms as well as in separate educational environments by both general education and special education teachers, previous studies mostly focused on general education teachers.

In Turkey, special education teachers and general education teachers are trained in separate programs and they are taught different classes and contents during their training. This dual system based on the belief that special and general education are completely different from one another (Tohum Otizm Vakfı, 2010) can be regarded as one of the possible reasons why general education teachers feel inadequate in dealing with special needs students (Güner-Yıldız and Melekoğlu, 2012; Varlıer and Vuran, 2006). While general education teachers take courses on special education and inclusion during their undergraduate education, the credits and contents of these classes are not sufficient to train candidate teachers at the level to teach special needs students. Also, general education and special education teachers receive their training in their undergraduate years based on different approaches. For instance, it is known that behavioral approach is adopted in special education techniques based on behaviorist approach is commonly used in shaping behaviors. Use of rewards, which is one of these techniques, is emphasized in almost each lesson during the undergraduate training of special education teachers. Special education teachers are trained with the mindset that use of rewards is an inseparable and significant part of teaching and that they should use rewards often. That aspect influences their practice of using more rewards in their teaching.

Literature points out to the existence of several studies on general education teachers' rewards use but only one study was found on special education teachers' reward use (Çelik and Eratay, 2007). Although the findings of this study presented that not only the general education teachers' but also special education teachers' reward use was insufficient, it is believed that reward use is significant among the methods used by special education teachers in shaping student behaviors. Use of rewards is an integral part of the different teaching methods used in special education such as applied behavior analysis errorless teaching methods. Hence, it is believed that special education teachers use more rewards in their classrooms. Studies conducted in general education classrooms show that teachers do not use high quality rewards frequently enough. In fact, it is important for teachers who work in general education classroom with normally developing children and in special education classrooms with special needs students to know and utilize effective methods to shape student behaviors. It is believed that collecting information about the causes of practices in reward use that are thought to differ between special education and general education teachers is significant for the studies that will be conducted to increase the quality of education. Therefore, this study was conducted to collect data about special education and general education teachers' views on reward use and the possible factors that affect the frequency and characteristics of reward use by special education and general education teachers.

2. Method

Focus group interview, a qualitative research method, was utilized in this study that aimed to collect data about special education and general education teachers' views and practices related to reward use. Qualitative studies aim to understand participants' perspectives and focus on understanding individuals and groups before making generalizations (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2014). Criticisms of the changing scientific understanding towards the limiting structure of positivism steer researchers to qualitative studies which enable in-depth studies of concepts in natural environments. Focus group interview method which is one of the qualitative research methods is defined as a carefully planned discussion in an environment where each individual can freely express their views and is mostly used to unearth surface information (Çokluk, Yılmaz and Oğuz, 2011). Focus group interviews focus on understanding individuals' behaviors and the reasons behind these behaviors, common perceptions in daily life and how individuals are affected from the others in the group (Şahsuvaroğlu and Ekşi, 2008). This study aimed to present special education and general education teachers' behaviors related to reward use, their common perceptions and the possible factors that affect these perceptions.

2.1. Participants

This study was conducted on a total of 26 teachers (13 general education teachers working in inclusion classes and 13 special education teachers) employed in schools in Istanbul Anatolian Side during the seminar period in 2014–2015 academic year. Purposeful sampling was used in the identification of participants. Purposeful sampling allows doing in-depth research by selecting rich cases in terms of information in line with the purpose of the study and is preferred when it is necessary to select cases that meet

certain criteria (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2014). Based on the purposes of this study, general education teachers who meet the criteria such as participating voluntarily, being accessible and giving permission for audio and video recording were selected to the research group from special education schools and general education schools with inclusion practices listed in the research permit provided by Istanbul Directorate of National Education. Individuals in focus group interviews should be selected among people with common characteristics with no hierarchical relationships or animosity (Şahsuvaroğlu and Ekşi, 2008). The cited criteria were followed in the selection of the participants for this study and it was ensured that teachers working at the same level were included in the group while teachers at administration posts or teachers with conflicts were excluded from the study. Table 1 presents information related to participating teachers.

Table 1.Characteristics of participants

	General Education Teachers	Special Education Teachers	Total
Female	12	8	20
Male	1	5	6
Mean Age	45 years (23– 62 years)	29 years (25 - 37 years)	
Profession Experience	1 - 43 years	3 – 15 years	
Graduation	Training institute: 4 Pre-School Teaching: 2 Classroom Teaching: 2 Chemistry Teaching:1 German:1 French Language and Liter:1 Arabic Language and Liter: 1 Public Administration:1	Special education: 12 Classroom Teaching: 1	

2.2.Process

Focus group interviews were held in two separate sessions for special education teachers and general education teachers in this study based on qualitative research techniques. Participants in a focus group interview are composed of a consultant/moderator, an observer/ report writer and the discussion group (Şahsuvaroğlu and Ekşi, 2008). Focus group interviews in this study were conducted with participation of the first researcher as the moderator and the second researcher as the observer in a round table setting/U formation where all participants could freely express their views. The interview with general education teachers lasted 63 minutes whereas the interview with special education teachers lasted 93 minutes. Interviews with the participants were recorded with the help of a video recorder and the data were analyzed with content analysis method.

Participants were asked a total of 11 questions during the interviews. While identifying the questions, two opening questions (Table 2, A and B questions), five general questions (Table 2, questions 1,2,3,4,5) and four analysis questions (Table 2, questions 6,7,8,9) were generated around the main theme (reward use) and these questions were shared with two instructors who are experts in the field of special education to be assessed in terms of suitability for purpose and accuracy of the statements. Partial changes were done based on the feedback from the instructors and the interview questions were finalized. The questions were directed to participants during focus group interviews in the order of opening questions, general questions and analysis questions. In the first step of the study, opening questions about the factors that affect student behaviors were asked to teachers in order to allow them communicate their views more comfortably. After warm up, teachers were asked about the management of desired and undesired student behaviors to direct them to the main theme: reward use. Lastly, questions that aimed to examine the main theme were directed to teachers to complete the study. Questions were adapted or repeated when necessary based on participants' responses.

Table 2.Focus group interview questions

Focus group main theme: Teacher views on reward use
A. There are many factors that determine student behaviors. In your opinion, what are the two most important factors among them? B. Is there a relationship between teacher behaviors and student behaviors?
1.What method do you follow to increase desired student behaviors? 2.Are the methods/ techniques you follow effective in increasing desired behaviors? 3.What method do you follow to decrease undesired student behaviors? 4.To what extent are the methods/ techniques you follow effective in decreasing undesired behaviors? 5.Are the methods you use in managing special education students' behaviors different from the methods you use for other students? 6.How frequently do you use rewards (positive reinforcers) to increase desired behaviors and decrease undesired behaviors? 7.In your opinion, how does reward use affect student behaviors and how effective is it? 8.Are there differences among teachers in terms of frequency of reward use and the methods they employ? If there are differences, what are the causes for these differences? 9.In your opinion, how was reward use handled in the faculties of education/trainee program/formation trainings?

2.3.Data Analysis

Data collected during focus group meetings via "note taking" and "video recording" were analyzed with the help of content analysis. Content analysis can be defined as the systematic technique that uses coding based on specific rules and summarizes the

words and sentences of a text in smaller content categories (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2014). The main purpose in content analysis is to obtain concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data. Data analysis is undertaken in four phases in content analysis: coding the data, finding the themes, arranging the codes and the themes and identifying and interpreting the findings (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013).

During data analysis in this study, first of all, the second researcher watched and transcribed the recorded videos. Then both researchers analyzed the written texts independently form one another. During analysis, whether the responses and comments to 11 questions were related to the main theme was assessed and unrelated sections (talk of personal experiences by participants, jokes, unrelated responses etc) were eliminated. Later, data were divided into sections to make sense and each part was coded to identify the conceptual meaning. After classifying the data based on their codes, themes that could explain these codes were identified, the next phase included identification and interpretation of findings.

The codes obtained as a result of independent analyses by both researchers were compared to evaluate reliability. The codes arrived at as a result of the comparisons was classified as common and uncommon and the ratio of common codes to the whole list was calculated. Accordingly, it was found that both researchers shared 86% of the codes obtained by them.

3. Findings

Data obtained from focus group interviews with the participation of 26 teachers were arranged in the form of tables and presented below. The first column in the tables present the questions used in the study, second column provides participant views and the third and fourth columns display respectively the codes and themes generated by classifying the codes.

3.1. Findings Related to Factors that Determine Student Behaviors

Data coding (Table 3) provided these findings. While general education teachers identified the factors that affected student behaviors as family and social environment, special education teachers stated these factors as individual characteristics of the child, teachers, peers and physical conditions.

Table 3. Views regarding the factors that determine student behaviors

Question	Views (direct quotation)	Coding/Frequency	Themes
There are many factors that determine student behaviors. In your opinion, what are the two most important factors among them?	Family is the first factor, i.e., the child acquires whatever you provide. As far as I have observed, it starts in the family.	General Education Teachers: *family (8) *social environment (6) *teacher (1)	1. family 2. teacher 3. social environment
	Attitudes of teachers, other stimulators at the school. Environmental factors are definitely very important, such as the classroom, classroom materials etc. But I also believe that teacher attitudes are very important as well.	Special Education Teachers: *individual characteristics of the child (2) *teacher (3) *peers (2) *physical conditions (2) *family (2)	1. family 2. teacher 3. social environment 4. physical conditions 5. individual characteristics of students

3.2. Findings Related to The Relationship Between Teacher Behaviors and Student Behaviors

All participants responded to the question "*Is there a relationship between teacher behaviors and student behaviors?*" positively. For instance, general education teachers responded to the question with the following statements: "*I think our energy reflects on them*" and '*I see myself in the students*". Special education teachers stated '*In my opinion, there is an extreme relationship, because students take their close family as role models first and then their teachers, therefore, it is one of the biggest factors in modifying behaviors*".

3.3. Findings Related to Practices to Increase Students' Desired Behaviors

General education teachers responded to the question "*What method do you follow to increase desired student behaviors?*", by mentioning rewards method, giving responsibility and love respect embracing. Special education teachers mentioned differential reinforcement, forming a relationship with the student first, positive behavior support, generating alternative behaviors, behavior control, using applied behavior analysis steps and combining methods via psychological dynamics (Table 4).

Teachers were also asked the following question: "*Are the methods/ techniques you follow effective in increasing desired behaviors?*" Teachers in both groups stated that the methods/techniques they implemented to increase desired behaviors were effective. For instance, special education teachers said that "*Teachers are as effective as the extent of their professional work*" and "*It is necessary to get to know the child. It is necessary to identify appropriate methods*".

Table 4.Views on practices to increase students' desired behaviors

Question	Views (direct quotation)	Coding/Frequency	Themes
What method do you follow to increase desired student behaviors?	Rewards, we use the rewards method. Rewards method.	General Education Teachers: *Use of reward (6) *Giving responsibility (1) *Love respect embracing (1)	1.Rewards …1.1.Social rewards …1.2.Academic rewards
	I only thank them. Orally, in front of their friends, by explaining the reason. …I do not use rewards much		
	We mostly use differential reinforcement	Special Education Teachers: *Differential reinforcement (1) *Positive behavior support (1) *Generating alternative behaviors (1)	1.Rewards …1.1. Social rewards …1.3.Food rewards
	Since I teach first graders and they are new students, I mostly give food as re-inforcers	*Using applied behavior analysis steps (2) *Using social reinforcers (1) *Using food as reinforcer (1) *Behavior control (1)	2.Behavior control methods …2.1.Shaping …2.2.Applied behavior analysis …2.3.Positive behavior support
	I try to practice the steps of applied be-havior analysis in the most productive way	*Combining methods via psychological dynamics (2) *Forming a relationship with the student first (3)	3.Including psychological processes

3.4.Findings Related to Practices to Decrease Students' Undesired Behaviors

General education teachers responded to the following question "*What method do you follow to decrease undesired student be-haviors*?" by stating these methods: talking about the problem, talking with the family, talking with the guidance teacher, time-out, fade-out, saturation and setting up classroom rules. Special education teachers stated that they ignored the behavior, used fade-out, consequences, first and second type punishment, PECS, rewarding appropriate behaviors and substituting the behavior (Table 5).

Table 5.Views on practices to decrease students' undesired behaviors

Question	Views (direct quotation)	Coding/Frequency	Themes
What method do you follow to de-crease undesired student behaviors?	I talk to students one on one, for instance, from time to time, I tell them, let's go talk with you outside for a while	General Education Teachers: *Talking about the problem (2) *Talking with the family (2) *Talking with the guidance teacher (3)	1.Fade-out 2.Interview/talk 3.Establishing rules
	I speak with the family	*Time- out, fade-out, saturation (1) *Establishing classroom rules (1)	
	With families		
	We mostly use substitution of behaviors. We substitute problem behaviors with another (desired behavior).	Special Education Teachers: *Ignoring the behavior (3) *Fade-out (3) *Consequences (2)	1.Fade-out 4.Rewarding desired behaviors 5.Punishment 5.1. Type one punishment
	I started PECS in my classroom this year	*First and second type punishment (1) *PECS (1) *Rewarding appropriate behavior, substitution (1)	5.2. Second type punishment 6.PECS

Teachers were also asked the following question: "*Are the methods/ techniques you follow effective in decreasing undesired behaviors*?". All teachers stated that the methods they employed were effective.

3.5.Findings Related to Methods Used for Special Education Students and Others

Some of the general education teachers responded to the question "*Are the methods you use in managing special education stu-dents' behaviors different from the methods you use for other students*?" by stating that methods used in managing the behaviors of special needs students differed from the methods used in managing the behaviors of normal peers whereas some of the general edu-cation teachers mentioned the need for using special methods. Special education teachers reported that methods used in managing special needs students' behaviors were not different form the methods used for other students.

3.6.Findings Related to The Frequency of Rewards (Positive Reinforcers) to İncrease Desired Behaviors and Decrease Undesired Behaviors?

General education teachers responded to the question regarding the frequency of reward use as little, once a year, once a week, once or twice in a lesson, not every day and from time to time. Special education teachers reported that they frequently used rewards (Table 6).

Table 6.Views on the use of rewards (positive reinforcers) to increase desired behaviors and decrease undesired behaviors?

Question	Views (direct quotation)	Coding/Frequency	Themes
How frequently do you use rewards (positive reinforcers) to increase desired behaviors and decrease undesired behaviors?	I use stickers, sometimes chocolate, maybe once a year. I don't use it every day, i.e. I use it from time to time, when it is needed	General Education Teachers: *Use once a year (1) *Use once a week (1) *Use once or twice in a class (1) *Not every day, from time to time (1) *Sporadic use of rewards (4) *Little use of rewards (3)	1.Using rewards very little 2.Using rewards sporadically
	We always use it. In fact, we use social reinforcers a lot	Special Education Teachers: *Frequent use (common response)	3.Using rewards frequently

3.6.Findings Related to Impact of Rewards on Student Behaviors

Both groups stated that rewards were effective as a response to the following question: *In your opinion, how does reward use affect student behaviors and how effective is it?*. For instance, one general education teacher stated that "*The student tries so hard that he/she increases his/her achievement*" and one special education teacher mentioned that "S*aying thank you, caressing student's head, showing affection, yes, in this respect I follow behavioral approach*".

3.7.Findings Related to The Differences Among Colleagues In Terms of Reward Use

The question related to differences among colleagues in terms of reward use was answered by general education teachers by mentioning students' and teachers' individual differences, differences in teacher training and graduation from various departments. Special education teachers mentioned the differences between general education teachers and special education teachers; the fact that special education teachers use rewards more frequently, general education teachers did not know about IEP, there were insufficient level of knowledge, lack of information about the effectiveness of rewards, crowded classrooms and difficulty to complete the curriculum (Table 7).

Table 7.Views on differences among colleagues

Question	Views (direct quotation)	Coding/Frequency	Themes
Are there differences among teachers in terms of frequency of reward use and the methods they employ? If there are differences, what are the causes for these differences?	Each person has a different personality i.e., our upbringing and perspectives on life are different. Therefore, we can provide different things. Our practices may be different It is also based on our training. Two fourth of the teachers we have in the teachers' room at the moment may not be subject matter teachers. I mean they are not content teachers in the field of classroom teaching.	General Education Teachers: *Individual differences among teachers (4) *Individual differences among students (2) *Differences in teacher training and graduation from various departments (2)	1.Undergraduate training …1.2.Graduation from various departments 2.Individual differences 3.Differences among students
	Let me put it this way: Um, I have worked in special sub class for four years. Umm, believe me there may be serious differences between the methods we use and the methods used by general education teachers. The fact that they do not know what individualized education plan is for. There is also the pressure on general education teachers related to curriculum to complete the curriculum in time. Classrooms are crowded, etc. They do not graduate without competence as well, but they do not master classroom control like we do.	Special Education Teachers: *Differences in undergraduate education (1) *The fact that general education teachers do not know about IEP (1) *Lack of knowledge on the part of general education teachers, lack of knowledge that use of rewards is (1) *Crowded classrooms (1) *Obligation to complete the curriculum pressure to increase success in exams (1)	1.Undergraduate education …1.2.Graduation from various departments 4.Environmental conditions 5.Crowded classrooms 6.Obligation to complete the curriculum

3.8. Findings related to the inclusion of the subject of reward use in professional training

General education teachers replied that "*I do not remember if we studied it*", "*it was not included in university training*" and "*it was emphasized that it should not be used too often*" when they were asked "*How was reward use handled in the faculties of education/trainee program/formation trainings?*". Special education teachers used the following answers to the question: "*General education teachers receive this training superficially; it is indispensible for special education teachers, general education teacher are trained based on the curriculum but special education teachers follow behaviorally focused education, special education teachers have an extensive one year candidate teaching*" (Table 8).

Table 8. Views related to the inclusion of the subject of reward use in professional training

Closing Question	Views (direct quotation)	Coding/Frequency	Themes
In your opinion, how was reward use handled in the faculties of education/trainee program/formation trainings?	I graduated last year…I actually learned about rewards and punishment (while I was studying for) for KPSS (Public Personnel Selection Examination) though I graduated from Marmara. To tell you the truth, I do not remember. I graduated from French department I do not remember either. I am as old as the hills	General Education Teachers: *Not remembering whether it was studied at the university (6) *Not studying it during university training (2) *Being taught that it should not be used too often (2)	1.Not given information about reward use 2.Use of rewards was not included (in the training) 3.It was emphasized that use of rewards should not be used frequently
	For example, in my university, I started with drama in the first year and took behavioral change in the second year… We already learned these for four years in an applied manner. One of the problems in classroom teaching may be related to lack of applied practices. Maybe since the basic feature in our training is the fact that reinforcers are indispensible, we receive a very good training in this regard. For four years, we always come across this in all courses embedded in different techniques and we are remolded in this. But of course they may also be taught this, they may be provided with information but probably, it is more superficial.	Special Education Teachers: *General education teachers learn about reward use superficially, rewards are sued by special education teachers (1) *General education teachers are trained based on the curriculum (1) *Special education teachers are trained based on behavioral approach (2) *Special education teachers have a year of extensive candidate teaching (3)	1. Not given information about reward use …1.2. Special education teachers are trained based on behavioral approach …1.3. General education teachers are trained based on the curriculum 2. Use of rewards was not included (in the training) 4.There are opportunities to practice in special education

4. Discussion

This study set out to investigate the characteristics of special education and general education teachers' reward use in the teaching process with the help of focus group interviews. Focus group interviews which can provide opportunities to obtain initial information that may be the basis for future studies are conducted to comprehend individuals' behaviors and the reasons behind them and to learn common perceptions and ways of interactions among individuals (Şahsuvaroğlu and Ekşi, 2008). This study examined common perceptions and behaviors of two separate teacher groups graduated from various teaching programs and the results showed significant differences between these two teacher groups.

Although rewards or positive reinforcers are regarded as one of the techniques that should be frequently used by teachers in educational environments (Brophy, 2006; Landrum and Kauffman, 2006), studies present that frequency of reward use among teachers in the teaching process is quite insufficient (Çifci, Yıkmış and Akbaba-Altun, 2001; Güner, 2012; Nafpaktitis, Mayer and Butterworth, 1985; Sazak-Pınar and Güner-Yıldız, 2013; Sucuoğlu, Demirtaşlı and Güner, 2009; Swinson and Harrop, 2001). Findings of the current study also support the studies that point to lack of rewards use by general education teachers. In focus group interviews undertaken by general education teachers, teachers reported that they used rewards limitedly and infrequently. It is highly thought provoking to hear that one of the teachers mentioned he/she used rewards only once a year. On the other hand, research findings based on teacher statement showed that reward use by special education teachers was continuous and frequent. While both teacher groups stated that reward use by teachers was effective on student behaviors, they displayed different behaviors in terms of how they use rewards.

When they were asked about the cause of differences in reward use, general education teacher stated that this difference was based on several factors such as differences in undergraduate training, individual differences and differences in students. Special education teachers emphasized the differences in undergraduate training along with environmental conditions, crowded classrooms and the obligation to complete the curriculum for general education teachers in a timely manner. Results show that teachers regard differences in undergraduate education as the most significant reason behind different practices in reward use. Undergraduate education or trainee program/formation training that prepare teachers for the profession seem to train the as educators with different perceptions and therefore with different practices. Responses of teachers to another question directed by the researcher also support the view that there are different perspectives related to reward use in different teaching programs. When asked about their views on how reward use was introduced during their professional training, general education teachers stated that they did not remember if the topic was addressed, that it was not studied during university training and that they were advised not to use it too frequently. Special education teachers stated that they used rewards frequently, they were graded on their use of rewards during their one-year extensive candidate teaching process, they were taught in a behaviorally centered manner and general education teachers had superficial knowledge related to the subject and the training they received centered on the curriculum. Results present that both teacher groups receive different trainings regarding the use of rewards. Literature similarly states that special education programs and faculty programs that train general education teachers differentiate in terms of philosophy (Brownell et. al., 2005). Bear (2013) also mentions that applied behavior analysis training received by special education teachers in their undergraduate years is provided to general education teachers in a limited manner. The fact that general education teachers did not even remember if they studied reward use

during their undergraduate, formation or trainee program process while special education teachers receive extensive theoretical and applied training on the use of rewards during their education is regarded as another significant and interesting finding that should be investigated in other studies.

Other findings in the study show that differences between these two teacher groups are not only limited to rewards use. For instance, general education teachers stated the family and social environment as the most effective factors that determine student behaviors whereas special education teachers cited other factors such as students' individual differences, teachers, peers, physical conditions and family. General education teachers' views on the decisiveness of family and social environment on student behaviors may be regarded as a perspective that limits their power to change student behaviors. Because, based on this perspective, it is not possible to change student behavior without changing the family or the social environment. On the other hand, while mentioning different factors that determine student behaviors, special education teachers emphasized teacher attitudes and presented their perceptions that teachers have the power to change and shape student behaviors. Responses to the question related to the methods used to decrease undesired student behaviors exemplify the significance assigned to the sense of power by both groups. While general education teacher stated that they also used fade-out and rule establishment, they mostly tried to solve problems by talking to family or the guidance counselor. General education teachers' belief that undesired behaviors are caused by family or the social environment may direct them to these sources to solve problems related to students. However, special education teachers reported that they used techniques such as fade-out, rewarding desired behaviors, punishment and PECS which rely on teachers' power to remove behavioral problems. Another interesting finding is related to general education teachers' statements regarding the "use of rewards" to increase desired behaviors. As a matter of fact, general education teachers had previously stated they used rewards very infrequently and even avoided reward use due to its disadvantages. Other studies also support the findings that general education teachers' reward use is not sufficient (Güner, 2012; Sazak-Pınar and Güner-Yıldız, 2013; Swinson and Harrop, 2001). For instance, in their study that examined the behaviors of special education teachers and general education teachers working in inclusion classrooms, Çelik and Eratay (2007) found that teachers did not have sufficient knowledge related to the use of reinforcers and even when they had appropriate skills and knowledge, they avoided the use of reinforcers. It is interesting for teachers to state that they used rewards in managing student behaviors when it is clear that their reward use was infrequent in this study. This contradiction can be interpreted as general education teachers' mental confusion related to positive and negative aspects of reward use.

Differences between these two teacher groups can also be observed in the responses they provided to other questions. While general education teachers define their practices by statements used in daily practices (I only thank the student… call him outside to talk), special education teachers were observed to use more technical statements (we mostly use differential reinforcement… I try to implement the steps of applied behavioral analysis). The change in discourse used by teachers when they explicated their practices may be related to differences in age between teacher groups. While mean age in general education teachers was 45, mean age for special education teachers was 29. Other than two 23- year old general education teachers, the rest of the general education teachers were between the ages of 30 and 62. While differences in discourse in teachers that belong to different generations may be based on the periodical differences in their education and the characteristics of their age group, the fact that discourse of the newly graduated teachers who were 23 year old resembled that of the other general education teachers instead of special education teachers who were their peers shows that the difference wasn't solely based on differences in age.

When asked whether the methods used for special education students and others were different, general education teachers stated that methods they employed were different and special methods needed to be used. Special education teachers, on the other hand, reported that the methods used for both students groups were not dissimilar. General education teachers' view that the methods for special needs students should be different looks like the product of their outlook on these students. According to studies, general education teachers believe that special needs students should be educated in separate environments and with special methods and that they do not consider themselves competent and suitable to train these students (Cullen, Gregory and Noto, 2010; Gökdere, 2012; Hemmings and Woodcock, 2011; Sadioğlu, Bilgin, Batu and Oksal, 2013; Sucuoğlu, Bakkaloğlu, İşcen-Karasu, Demir and Akalın, 2014; Thaver ans Lim, 2014). The views of participating teachers in this study support the findings of these studies. It is observed that special education teachers have a more inclusive perspective and believe that same methods can be used regardless of individual differences in students. This result gives rise to the thought that both teacher groups have undergone different training processes during their undergraduate years.

As a result, research findings demonstrate that these two teacher groups differ in terms of various angles such as their training, perspectives on students and methods and their use of technicality in statements. While this result proves the significance of teacher training in order to create effective and productive education environments at schools, it is also a significant finding that needs to be investigated further by educational administrators and researchers.

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