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Observation method in assessing instructor performance: ISMEK case study

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to measure the efficiency of the instructors' classroom management at the ISMEK, an organization of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. ISMEK is undoubtedly at the top of the list of the contributors of the adult education. ISMEK was founded in 1996 and as of 2012; it provides service to about 240.000 people annually in about 230 course centers. Therefore, it could be stated that ISMEK is fascinating in terms of its budget and the quality of the service it provides. In this study, it is aimed to assess the classroom performance of qualified instructors by using observation method. Classroom efficiency of the subjects were observed by expert supervisors, the findings were recorded in the assessment forms, then these forms were classified and interpreted after performing the necessary analyses. It was observed that, the older the instructors get, the more developed they become and the better they perform; and the longer they teach, the more efficient they become. It is also observed that their performance improve in parallel with their seniority. No significant difference was found for gender of the instructors.

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1. Introduction

Classroom is a common environment where teaching – learning activities take place. The majority of the time of teachers and students is spent in this common environment. During the time spent in the classroom, teachers and students act as the members of this common environment and behave according to predetermined aims and schedules. Teachers are responsible from organization and management of learning environment and experiences in the classrooms. This responsibility requires the teacher to be aware of the principles and methods of classroom

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management (Demirtaş, 2009, p.5).

A prerequisite for an effective education is providing an effective classroom management. Classroom management can be defined as the basic and the most difficult task to be accomplished by the teacher successfully (Aslan, 2010, p. 6). According to Martin; classroom management is a broad term which describes the efforts of the teachers in the classroom such as learning, social interaction and student behaviors (Martin et al., 1998, p.6). And the teacher is the person who carries out these activities in a healthy way. Classroom management is also described as the discipline of the teacher, behavior control and decreasing the other unacceptable student behavior (Gettinger, 1988, p.227).

Managing the behaviors in the classroom in order to increase the learning of the students has always been an issue which attracts the attention of the teachers and trainers (Lewis, 2005, p.730). In this context, the purpose of classroom management is to increase the time that the students spend on appropriate learning activities and to enable the teachers to accomplish their purposes (Ünal, 2003, p.28). One of the difficulties that the teachers often experience is providing education at the same time and under the same conditions to the students whose level of knowledge, skills, learning pace and motivation are different from each other. A successful classroom management is considered as the first step to be successful in education. In a way, those who become successful in classroom management have the characteristics of a good teacher (Demirel, 2000, p.202).

The researchers who reviewed the classroom management methods have put forward that there is not a unique method that can be called as classroom management but it is more likely to be achieved by using a number of techniques and procedures by the teachers (Akin et al., 2007, p.54).

In terms of achievement of educational objectives, the importance of classroom management maintains its importance all the time. The way of achieving the cognitive level of understanding at the highest level for students is through the steps that are designed by Benjamin S. Bloom. These steps are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The way of climbing these steps is through creating productive classroom environments. Such environments can only be created with effective classroom management (Athanasidou et al., 2003, p.535).

However, some teachers who are worried about their own teaching skills fail in motivating their students (Abu-Tineh et al., 2011, p.175). Teachers should be aware of their personal capabilities as the manager of the classroom and correspondingly, they should improve their teaching skills (Midthassel, 2006, p.367).

Efficiency of the teaching decreases as long as the teachers are worried about their personal capabilities (Ashton & Webb, 1986, p.176). Therefore, it could be claimed that the teachers who are self confident and believe in their personal capabilities are necessary for a successful classroom management.

2. Method

The purpose of this study is to measure the efficiency of the instructors' classroom management. Classroom management can be briefly defined as managing the environment in which teaching and learning activities take place. Efficiency of the classroom management or the classroom management performance can be regarded as the indicator of the results that are intended to be accomplished. After the prospective teachers are chosen as a result of careful examination, subjected to orientation and assigned to the classrooms, observation of the education process takes place. The main purpose of all the procedure and investment on the education is to increase the classroom management performance of the teachers. In this context, one of the requirements is, naturally, the measurement of the performance of the teachers. Measurement of classroom management performance of the qualified instructors working in informal educational institutions forms the basis of this study. A control set consisting of 22 questions was used to achieve this aim. Control criteria were applied to the qualified instructors by the supervisor by means of observation during the courses.

2.1. Main problem in the study

Our main hypotheses that form the basis of our study and that are going to be tested are: i. There is not a significant difference between the classroom management performance of the teachers according to their genders. ii.

The older the instructors get, the more developed they become and the better they perform. iii. The longer they teach, the more efficient they become. iv. Their performance improve in parallel with their seniority.

2.2. Scope and limitations of the study

The scope of the study is informal educational institutions that operate in Istanbul – Turkey. Among the courses of these organizations, courses of ISMEK, which is an organization of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, form the basis for our study. It was determined that there were 2.150 trainers who work for ISMEK at the time of the study. The lessons of these 233 of trainers were observed during the lessons. The collected data is only about ISMEK courses in Istanbul and this could be considered as a limitation for the study. On the other hand, it could be stated that observation of 233 of 2.150 instructors is quite a high proportion and contributed to obtain a quality result on the organizational base.

2.3. Implementation of the study

An observation form was used in order to determine the classroom management performance of the trainers. The trainers who work for ISMEK that are going to be observed in the classroom were chosen randomly. The form that contains the control criteria consists of two parts. Age, gender, education and years of seniority are in the first part. The questions which were obtained from the internet and used by the private schools to measure the classroom management performance of the teachers were collected in the second part. These questions were customized for informal educational institutions and learners. 22 statements which were customized according to the adult education and we supposed that could measure the classroom management performance of the teachers were created. These statements were given in 4 point Likert type scale and observations of the teachers according to these 22 criteria were done. Each criteria was assessed according to the items which were; always, usually, sometimes and never. The assessments were done by the expert supervisors almost all of whom work in higher education institutions. These expert supervisors observed the teacher during the lesson at least for 30 minutes. The forms that had been prepared by the expert supervisors according to the observation results were collected and collected data were subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS.

2.4. Body and research sample

The body of the study is informal educational institutions that operate in Istanbul – Turkey. Within this body, ISMEK, which is the biggest informal educational institution in Istanbul, comprises the research sample. 233 of 2.150 qualified instructors were included in the study and comprised our research sample.

2.5. Statistical techniques applied

The data collected via survey form were analysed using the software SPSS. The forms filled out by the supervisors according to their observations were loaded into the SPSS software and primarily demographic information was collected. Secondly, the frequencies and percentages of choices chosen by the supervisors were calculated and the percentage values were shown in the table to make comparisons convenient. The evaluations of supervisors were subjected to one-way analysis of variance; the means, *f* values and significance levels of those evaluations were collected. Appropriate interpretation was made depending on significance levels and standard deviations collected as a result of the application of statistical techniques on findings.

3. Findings

3.1. Demographic features of the research sample

f values and contributory values representing the age, gender, seniority and education levels of the research sample are shown in Table 1-4.

Table 1. Age values

Age values	f	%
-29	76	32.6
30-39	79	33.9
40-49	57	24.5
50 +	21	9.0
Total	233	100

When the age values of the research sample are analysed; those who are 29 years old or lower constitute 32.6% of the research sample, while those between the ages of 30-39 constitute %33.9, those between the ages of 40-49 constitute 24.5% and those over 50 years of age constitute 9%. According to these data, the largest group is constituted by those who are between the ages of 30-39.

Table 2. Gender values

Gender	f	%
Female	194	83.3
Male	39	16.7
Total	233	100

When the genders of the research sample are analyzed, it is found that 83.3% are women, while 16.7% are men. Women constitute the majority of the research sample.

Table 3. Educational values

Education values	f	%
High school or lower	74	31.8
Associate's degree	44	18.9
Bachelor's degree	100	42.9
Post Graduate Degree	15	6.4
Total	233	100

When the educational values of the research sample are analysed, it is found that 31.8% are constituted by those who were high school or lower level graduates. Associate's degree (two years of higher education) graduates constitute 18.9%. While the graduates of Bachelor's Degree constitute 42.9% of the research sample, the ratio of those with a Post-graduate Degree constitute 6.4%. The results show that the largest group of the research sample is constituted by graduates of Bachelor's Degree.

Table 4. Seniority values

Seniority Values	f	%
0-3 years	75	32.2
4-7 years	130	55.8
8-11 years	15	6.4
12 + years	13	5.6
Total	233	100

When the seniority values, which show the duration the research sample spent at work, are analyzed, those who worked for up to 3 years constitute 32.2%, while those who worked between 4-7 years constitute 55.8%, those who worked between 8-11 years constitute 6.4% and those who worked for more than 12 years constitute 5.6% of the

research sample. The results show that the largest group of the research sample is constituted by those who worked in the education sector between 4-7 years.

3.2. Analysing data

The data collected via the survey form were analysed using the SPSS software primarily within the scope of analysis of our study. The forms filled out by the supervisors, who are adept educators themselves, according to their observations in the educational environment are loaded into the SPSS software and primarily demographic information are acquired and presented in the title above. Secondly, the frequencies and percentages of choices chosen by the supervisors in the classroom as a result of their observations are calculated and the percentage values are shown in Table 5 to make comparisons convenient.

After this point, statistical analyses were made in accordance with the evaluations of the supervisors. One-way analysis of variance was also conducted within this scope. Mean values, f values and significance levels were analyzed among the data acquired. As a result of these analyses, significance levels and standard deviations were interpreted appropriately.

3.3. Evaluation results of the research sample

Instructors, who took part in the sample, were evaluated based on the criteria below during their classes. Consisting of a total of 22 different statements aspiring to assess the classroom efficiency of the instructors, each criterion was evaluated with the options of always, usually, sometimes and never. When the evaluations were analysed, the table below which represents 233 qualified instructors was formed.

Table 5. Evaluation results of the research sample (%)

Evaluation Statements		Always (%)	Usually (%)	Sometimes (%)	Never (%)
The statements below were coded to represent “Always” for 1, “Usually” for 2, “Sometimes” for 3 and “Never” for 4.					
1	Daily Plan And Preparation For Class	52,4	42,1	4,7	,9
2	Attention Getting And Appropriately Beginning Instruction	51,9	37,8	9,9	,4
3	Relating A Subject To Previous Ones (For Applied Branches, Relating To Previous Work And Models)	61,8	35,6	2,8	-
4	Fluent And Effective Diction And Instruction	62,7	31,8	5,6	-
5	Using The Board, Class Instruments And Materials Appropriately	40,3	51,9	7,3	,4
6	Motivating Trainees And Teaching In An Enjoyable Way	58,4	35,6	6,0	-
7	Relating The Shows And Works Exemplifying (Explaining) The Concepts And Skills To Current Use	55,4	36,9	7,7	-
8	Asking Questions, Ensuring The Participation Of Trainees	57,1	39,5	3,0	,4
9	Addressing Trainees With Their Names	67	24	7,3	1,7
10	Trainee Communication, Feedback And The Style Of Answering The Questions	61,8	35,6	2,6	-
11	Using Body Language (Walking, Mimics, Movements, Intonation....)	52,8	38,6	8,6	-
12	Using Different Educational Methods (Auditory, Visual, Tactile-Kinaesthetic)	42,1	41,6	16,3	-
13	Assessment And Evaluation (Asking Questions And Evaluating Answers)	44,6	51,1	4,3	-
14	Summing Up The Lecture	59,7	36,9	3,0	,4
15	Giving Homework, Directing For The Next Lecture (For Applied Branches, Relating Current Work To Next Classes Work)	53,6	38,6	7,7	-
16	Content Knowledge (Aesthetic Approach For Applied Branches)	76,0	21,5	2,6	-
17	Keeping Up With The Syllabus	55,8	41,2	2,1	,9
18	Time Management	57,9	38,6	3,4	-

19	Making Use Of Instruments And Written-Electronic Sources	44,2	42,5	12,9	,4
20	Authority, Maintaining Order And The Ability To Take Precautions Against Obstructions	63,5	34,3	2,1	-
21	Being A Role Model For Trainees And Attempts To Form Positive Behaviour	62,2	37,3	,4	-
22	Passion For Profession, Willingness And Teaching Enthusiasm	68,2	29,6	2,1	-

4. Discussion and conclusion

Informal education studies continue to be maintained with the work of both civil society organizations and in particular the Ministry of Education, as a reflection of the saying ‘education from the cradle to the grave’. The studies carried out in this field, which has to be assessed differently from formal education, possess some difficulties in the sense of the attendance levels of trainees. The position of the instructors in this field, which is also seen as a hobby, affects the educational activities and classroom management performances.

As a result of the studies made about the common characteristics of successful educational institutions, efficiency in classroom management is one of the prominent topics. In a study made in this scope (Turan, 2008, s.14), the efficiency in classroom management is pointed out as one of the essential features of successful institutions.

Unless instructors, who form the main factor affecting classroom management, learn about the dynamics with a role in the process of development, it seems difficult for them to precisely comprehend how classroom management can be made effective. Those who are responsible for teacher training should also have a viewpoint involving further beyond the first few years of teachers’ professions, and ask themselves this question: “How do we prepare teachers for a learning process that will continue for a lifetime?” (Bakioğlu, 2009, p.1-2).

In this applied study we made to assess the classroom management performance of the instructors who teach in informal education, it is found that the efficiency of the instructors increase in direct proportion with the increase in their ages. It is also found that instructors’ length of education is also directly related to their classroom performance. The longer the instructor received education the more efficiency of education and classroom management performance becomes in parallel. When assessed from the viewpoint of another criteria we assess the classroom management performances of instructors, which is seniority meaning the time spent at work, classroom performance and efficiency of instruction increased depending on the length of seniority. No significant difference can be found according to assessments based on genders. In this respect, the instructors’ being male or female did not point out a significant difference in forming the classroom performance.

The comparison of the results of this study, in which we used observation method to assess the classroom management performance of qualified instructors, with other future studies might be convenient for contribution to literature.

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