

Problems of the Immigrant Students' Teachers: Are They Ready to Teach?

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Abstract

Aim of the study is to investigate the problems faced by the teachers' of immigrant children living in Turkey. The study was conducted based on the qualitative phenomenological research design and purposive sampling method was used. Qualitative research technique was used to collect, analyze and interpret data and technically content analysis was used in this research. A semi-structured interview schedule prepared in accordance with the qualitative research approach is used as a data collection tool. As a result of the analysis, it was found that main problems face by these teachers were categorized as problems caused by the Ministry of Education, adaptation problems of the students and problems related with the migrant parents. Among them, most complained problems were those caused by the Ministry of Education. Depending on the data obtained, it can be said that, Ministry of Education has no policy or planning about the education of the migrants and the teachers were not prepared for the education and training of migrant children. Another finding was the indifference of the migrant parents regarding the school. A striking point in the study was that the teachers never mentioned about the problems concerning the differences of race, ethnicity or gender. As a result of the evaluation, it is suggested that the Ministry of Education should provide language training for immigrants and care more about the equivalence of the students, training teachers and candidate teachers about immigrant pedagogy and to develop better relations between the school and the migrant families.

Keywords: immigrant students, secondary schools, primary schools, problems of teachers, Turkey

1. Introduction

Having a broad migration and migrant history, Turkey has recently been the center for the asylum seekers, refugees, migrant workers and irregular migrants. Besides, Turkey is known as the first country, in reach of those immigrants coming from Asian countries, migrants from the neighboring countries waiting for transit passing and the refugees who fled from Syria (EU-MIPEX, 2014). It is understood that the migrants came mostly from Afghanistan, Iraq, Azerbaijan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iraq, and the Syria. It can be said that terrorist actions rising in these countries, civil wars, economical problems and the education expectation plays role for these migrations (Düvell, 2006). However, the Syrians began to arrive as refugees due to the civil war since 2011. According to the Ministry of Education the majority of the foreign children in primary and secondary education are from Albania, Syria, Somalia, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Iran and Bulgaria. However, there is no official statistics indicating the participation of school age migrant children in education in general.

Education of immigrants in Turkey, like in other countries, causes an obligation to take some precautions, since the education system in the host country and differences in the education level of immigrants, adversely affect the host country's education managers and the immigrant children. One of these effects has economic aspects (Ahsan, 1997). The education background of the immigrant gives direction to the employment quality of the migrated country (Kajee, 2011). Immigrants without insufficient and unequal education cause substantial economic problems in the country they move. Besides, adult migrants who do not know the migrated country's native language cannot find a job or have to work with low wages. The immigrants leave the school to earn more money. This situation turns into a vicious cycle and causes sociological, economic and psychological dissatisfaction of the individual (Docquier & Rapoport, 2004). Economic theories, which discuss the relationship between education and emigration, regard immigrants as a human capital and emphasize the impact of the

education on the migrated country's economy and the immigrants' economic income (Massey & Espinosa, 1997). The knowledge and skills acquired through formal education increase the economic income of the migrant, at the same time reduce the risks he may encounter and ease his accordance to the new country he is going to settle (Stark & Bloom, 1985). Another factor is the effect of education on social interaction on the immigrant in the country he migrated. It is assumed that the immigrant may reduce the risks by the help of communication in the host country. Whilst establishing this interaction with the people and the number of them he would meet during training plays an important role (De Jong, 2000). One advantage of education for the migrants is that it facilitates their integration to the country they are settling. Another advantage of education is that it reduces racial discrimination and the prejudices against immigration (Abbas, 2002).

Children are the most effected ones from the process of migration and its social consequences (Giani, 2006). The problems of migrant families regarding employment, education, health, housing, socialization and security directly affect the children. The circumstances they face in the migrated country and internalizing them is hard for the children as well as their parents, which makes the children disadvantageous in the migrated country (Williams, 2009). Variables such as low level of education, poverty, withdrawal from social security and cultural differences further worsen the children's disadvantageous position in the social processes and the lack of opportunities offered to migrant children causes this problem to form bigger risk centers (Derezotes, 2000; Nathan, 2008). The stress of coping with a new language and new culture causes migrant children to face with learning, behavioral and emotional problems (Qin, 2009). While the immigrant student tries to accord to a new culture in the school, his parents continue with their own cultural behaviors in mean time (Kajee, 2011). The immigrant children also have to cope with this duality. Migration and education are phenomena which are interconnected and have sub dimensions (Alexander, Entwisle, & Bedinger, 1994). The skills provided by education play an important role on the new life of the individual in the new country. Moreover, education provides him/her to accord to the inhabited country in short while (OECD, 2006). Besides, host country is also affected from the qualities of the migrants in social and economic terms. A quality education provided for immigrants will return as profit to the country rather than cost and takes its place in the economy as qualified manpower (Rumbaut, 1997). Thus, the education expenditure spent for the migrants can be accepted as an investment for the country. In the migrated countries, the solution to these problems has taken priority in political agenda and it has been a matter of discussion how the migrants are going to be educated, the quality of teacher and the function of school leadership, at the level of parliament (Gold, 2005).

According to the report of European Union The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), although Turkey is an immigration country, it has been insufficient in producing policies about the education of immigrants. Although there are legal texts about the education of immigrants, conditions relating to access to education of migrants are unsuitable. Besides, there is no instruction or guidance concerning the education of migrants country-wide. The schools have not been prepared for the education of immigrants and teachers have not been guided about the education they should give to migrant children in terms of intercultural citizenship, human rights, discrimination against immigrants etc. (EU-MIPEX, 2014). Turkey is facing the effects of cultural diversity due to increasing amount of accepted immigrants into the country. This demographic change brings the acceptance of the reality that migrant children are from a different culture and the need of education which will respond to global economy based on knowledge. So that, some precautions are needed, especially in terms of education and development of migrant children for removing social, economic, ethnical and language barriers and value differences (E.U., 2012). However there is not any scientific study in Turkey about the education of migrant children. The literature is very little for the study of migrant education. Present study is the first in Turkey to investigate the views of teachers who teach migrant children and it is important that it will be an example in education planning for educators, policy and decision makers. In this direction the purpose of the study is to identify the problems of teachers of migrant children and develop solutions for these problems.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study was conducted based on the qualitative phenomenological research design, which attempts to describe the essence of experiences about a phenomenon. Phenomenological research design focuses on the phenomena about which people have some awareness but do not have a deep and detailed understanding (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). The main purpose of phenomenological research is to set out from the experiences and perceptions of individuals.

2.2 Participants

Participants of the research consist of 20 teachers who teach in 2 primary schools and a secondary school in Tokat city center. These teachers teach 65 migrant children who are enrolled in these schools. The participants were selected according to purposive sampling method in line with the research questions. All participants were asked for their consent to voluntarily participate to the study. Participants consist of 5 female and 15 male teachers.

2.3 Data Collection

A semi-structured interview form was used to collect data. The semi-structured interview forms let the interviewees to express themselves. The data sources in phenomenological researches are individuals of groups who experience and able to reflect of the phenomenon under investigation. The major data collection method in phenomenological researches is interview. Interview is the most frequently used data collection technique in qualitative researches. Interviews allow the researchers to get detailed data about a certain research topic or question. Through interviewing, it is intended to understand some properties that cannot be observed otherwise such as people's experiences, attitudes, thoughts, intentions, comments, mental perceptions and reactions (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

The interviews were conducted in person in participants' schools during April and May, 2015. Participating teachers were asked "What are the problems you face regarding the immigrant students?" During the interviews, a comfortable atmosphere was created for the participants to express themselves easily and no directing or manipulating interferences were done by the interviewer. In addition to the interview notes, a voice recorder was used during the interviews by the researcher to prevent data loss. Participants were informed about the recording procedure. All participants had their consent for being recorded except for two whose interviews were recorded taking notes by hand.

2.4 Data Analysis

All the data, both handwritten and digitally recorded, were transcribed verbatim into computer as text files. The transcribed data set took about 50 pages. In accordance with the research ethics, individual interview transcriptions were sent to each participant via their electronic mails as text attachments and they were asked to read their interview transcriptions carefully and resend it to the researcher after making partial modifications if necessary. After necessary modifications were done the texts were preserved duly and analyzed in accordance to the research purposes by researcher. The written documents obtained during the interviews were read and analyzed in accordance with the relevant literature. The long answers by the participants were shortened by the researcher without spoiling the main idea of the response. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, participants were coded and numbered as *Participant 1-20*. The data were analyzed using content analysis method. The main purpose of content analysis is to analyze the data in depth. Therefore, the similar data among the obtained data set were gathered together based on certain concepts and themes, organized in meaningful ways and interpreted (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). First, raw data was determined to analyze and codes were created. Themes were determined as "Problems originated from Ministry of education", "Adaptation problem of pupils" and "Problems Caused by Immigrant Parents" by using codes. Findings obtained were made interpretation. The most important criteria in evaluating the qualitative researches is the validity and reliability of the data obtained in the research, their analysis and results derived. One strategy used to increase the validity of the qualitative study is prolonged interaction (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). In this respect, the interviews with the participants were kept as long as possible. Another strategy to increase the validity of the study was to participant checking and approval, which was explained earlier. The participants' views regarding the subthemes were designated in frequencies, which were displayed in tables and interpreted by researcher.

3. Findings

The result of the collected data shows that the problems of teachers about migrant students originate from Ministry of Education, migrant and native students and migrant parents. The problems of the teachers of migrant students' are summarized in the table below and analyzed after.

Table 1. The reasons of teachers' problems with immigrant students

Main Theme	Sub Themes	<i>f</i>
Problems originated from Ministry of education	Turkish Language Education	20
	Equivalence of diplomas	20
	In-service training	13
Adaptation problem of pupils	Adaptation of migrant students	17
	Adaptation of native students	3
Problems Caused by Immigrant Parents	Inadequacy and lack of interest of migrant parents	11

3.1 Problems Originated from Ministry of Education

Problems originated from Ministry of education, is the most referred ones by teachers. In this theme the problems of teachers are mainly, Turkish language knowledge of students, equivalence of diplomas and in-service training of teachers. It is clearly understood from the statements that teachers and students have problem concerning communication skills. The communication problem directly affects student academic success. Besides, teachers' lack of information about the readiness level of students and lack of knowledge about migrant pedagogy deteriorates the problem. All of the teachers speak about this problem and they expressed their need for support of Ministry of Education to solve the problem.

3.1.1 Turkish Language Education

According to the statements of all teachers in the study group, migrant students' inadequate knowledge of Turkish grammar adversely affects both students and the teachers. Inadequate grammar knowledge was negatively reflected on the success of students, e.g., *Migrant students have problem in education since they can't speak Turkish properly [Participant 13]; Language problem is the most important one. They can't understand most of the lesson [Participant 4]; Because of wrong pronunciation the other students laugh at them. They can't build friendship with other students [Participant 7]*. This problem affects the teachers, on the other hand, adversely as they cannot use classroom management process effectively and efficiently and fail to realize the lesson objectives accordingly. Effects for students can be interpreted as the failure to learn for immigrant students, failure to ensure the expected behavior changes and weaknesses in their social relationships with friends.

3.1.2 Equivalence of Diplomas

Another problem of teachers is the equivalence of diplomas. It must be determined by scientific methods which grades the migrant pupils should attend to. But all the teachers participated in the study notes that school administration just considered about the age of the pupil to be enough for placing the students into classes, e.g., *Some of the migrant students didn't attend school, they gave a break, the enrollment and grading has been done by a commission but their level of readiness is inconsistent [Participant 9]; We cannot test their knowledge, and detect their prior knowledge as well [Participant 15]; They are classified into classes according to age. They were not put in classes according to their educational qualifications [Participant 16]*. Migrant pupils were classified without consideration of their educational background. Without determining what level of education they received in their own country, only deciding just by taking into account the age of the class is reflected negatively on the students' academic progress in the classroom. Besides, supplementary lessons are not enough. This situation makes academic success of a migrant student, with lack of language and whose level was not detected properly, debatable.

3.1.3 In-Service Training

Training needs of teachers intended for education of migrant students is another problem. Some of the teachers who participate in the study stated that they do not know what kind of behavior and approach they should use for migrant students, e.g., *I need to learn about the migrant psychology [Participant 18]*. Some teachers need to know about the cultural characteristics of immigrant children, e.g., *I need to know the culture of these students, their social and cultural backgrounds, their vulnerable values and rules of their religion [Participant 2]; I would like to participate in programs to teach the cultural features, sociological and historical characteristics [Participant 10]*. Under the sub theme of in-service training it is seen that especially migrant psychology and pupils' social and cultural features are other topics to be learned by the teachers. In this case it can be said that teachers do not take into account the characteristics of migrant students in planning and education processes.

3.2 Adaptation Problems of Students

Another problem faced by teachers is the adaptation of students. Teachers stated the problem of adaptation is two-fold: adaptation problem of native students and immigrant students separately. Therefore, it would not be correct to assess adaptation problem with only migrant students. Teachers care about adaptation of migrant students to school and their friends. However, they think immigrant students cannot adapt sufficiently to class and school, e.g., *They do not enter into social interaction [Participant 14]; They feel odd and humiliated since they are minority, they show poverty. First of all there is a need to fix the war psychology [Participant 11]; They have discipline problems. Students from Iraq are more problematic than the ones from Afghanistan [Participant 3]*. From the statements of teachers it can be understood that the problems mainly stem from their lack of Turkish language knowledge. It does not seem possible for the students to socialize unless they communicate.

The other side of the problem is adaptation of native students. It can be said that the perception of native students concerning the acceptance of foreigners and to live with them is negative, e.g., *Before, Turkish students excluded the migrant ones. We told them to empathy, asked them to think what they would face if they went to other countries, and told them to behave so [Participant 8]; It may be scary for the children to have a foreigner among them, sometimes they have disagreements because of language problems, they have arguments and fights, and they may have problems due to cultural differences [Participant 12]*. According to the statements of teachers, cultural differences cause native students to perceive the migrant students different from themselves. This perception prevents natives to approach to migrants.

When Turkish and migrant students are evaluated together, it can be said that they don't understand and know each other due to adaptation problems between students. Considering the issue, it is possible to say the main factor is migrant students' inadequate knowledge of Turkish language. An immigrant's failure to introduce himself, or to express their thoughts or feelings in Turkish will cause their native classmates not to know about them. So that, it is a natural consequence there is an adaptation problem among native students, who can't understand the migrant students who show different attitudes and behaviors because of their differences.

3.3 Problems Caused by Immigrant Parents

Teachers also considered lack of communication between school management and the migrant parents as another problem. In the sub theme of problems concerning parents, it is understood that the families do not know Turkish language, they have financial problems, they do not care about education and they do not plan to settle in Turkey, e.g., *Migrant families have economic issues. They are generally poor families without education. They don't care about school. They don't know Turkish anyway [Participant 17]; They have requests for asylum to foreign countries, they feel their stay here is temporary. Since they don't think to settle in Turkey, they don't learn Turkish. That's why they don't care about school [Participant 20]*. The most interesting thing in teachers' statements is that the families are not planning to settle in Turkey. You cannot expect these parents to learn Turkish. But this condition adversely affects school and parents relations. Additionally, parents' low level of education and negative attitude towards education is another negative factor in terms of school and parent interaction. Not being able to build a favorable school and parent relation is going to prevent the formation of school and family cooperation.

4. Results and Discussion

Aim of this study was to find out the problems of the teacher who teach migrant students. Problems of teachers are studied in under three themes. These themes were those caused by Ministry of education, adaptation of migrant and native students and the migrant parents. According to the results of the research, it is understood that the inputs of the education system and the process of education have problems in the education of migrant children in Turkey. The primary input of the education system is the readiness level of students. The core knowledge and cognitive, emotional and social skills determine the readiness level of the student (Forget-Dubois, Lemelin, Boivin, Dionne, Seguin, Vitaro, & Tremblay, 2007). Insufficiency of these skills affects school life and the performance of the students negatively. As it was seen from the findings, migrant students' lack of Turkish language skills has a negative reflection in their academic success. Except from academic success, migrant students' emotional and social development is prevented because of the communication problems. The sufficient development of social and emotional skills of migrant students who face language problems is going to have a negative reflection on the relations with native students (Connell & Prinz, 2002). Furthermore, inability to resolve the problem of adaptation of immigrant students may cause them to be rejected by their peers in the school (Guay, Boivin, & Hodges, 1999). As the teachers who participate in the study emphasized, the immigrant children in Tokat have adaptation problems with their peers. Then it can be said that the low level of readiness of migrant students' adversely affect their academic success and their adaptation with other friends in the school.

Whereas, Ministry of Education's policy to place students into classes just considering the age of the student disregarding their equivalence levels make the problems even worse. This is because the education needs of the pupils are determined not only by their age but also according to their readiness levels. In this context, it is quite important for the teacher to have information about the readiness levels of students whilst planning the education process. Furthermore it should be noted that the planning of education process is going to prevent possible discipline problems in the classroom.

Teachers stated that they are insufficient in their knowledge and understanding of migrant students. They need to be informed about cultural features of the migrant students during the education process. Besides, teachers want to learn how to treat and behave the migrant students. Educational need is also a general problem of teachers all over the world (Turner, 2007). This diagnosis reveals the pre-service and in-service training needs of the teachers (Pitkänen, Verma, & Kalekin-Fishman, 2002). It seems impossible for a teacher, who doesn't know migrant pedagogy and the cultural feature of the migrant students in the classroom, to motivate and attract the attention of them. Although teachers have negative prejudices against migrant students, this prejudice can be overcome with training (Peguero & Bondy, 2010). It is understood from the findings that both native and migrant students have adaptation problem. The importance of quality and capability of teachers is important for the solution of this problem. It is not possible for a teacher, who doesn't know about migrants, to introduce them to native students and build a favorable relation among them.

Another finding of the study is about migrant families. Teachers state that the migrant parents are uneducated with financial problems and think that they show lack of interest to school. But parents are essential parts of education process and they were expected to contribute (Farrell & Jones, 2000). The contribution of school and parents cooperation to student's psychological and social development is identified in various researches (Davis & Lambie, 2005). Parents who are out of the education system will not contribute to the system. Besides, migrant parents come to the new country with their own cultural features. Since the parents had no orientation and did not know Turkish, they continue to live with their culture in their new milieu. The multicultural understanding of children can grow with the help of the interaction of parents with the children and the effect of the education environment (Swick, Boutte, & Scoy, 1994). So, it can be said that different cultural structures and lack of communication increased the amount of teachers' problems (Li, 2001). Additionally, another point found in the findings is that teachers do not talk about differences like gender, race, ethnicity or religion.

From the findings obtained in this study it is understood that the main problems of teachers are insufficient school and uninterested parents. But it should be noted that managing diversity in education is a complicated process. Factors of diversity management such as gender, culture, social class, language, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion are the subjects that the school management has to overcome whilst managing differences (Oldroyd, 2005). Teaching migrant pedagogy, during teacher training period, by faculties of education can help them to overcome the problem. Alternative schools can be tried for improving the readiness level of migrant students. Turkish language and culture training which will be given by these schools can help positively for adaptation. Besides, multicultural activities organized by school management will help native students get to know them better. Using hidden curriculum and introducing different cultures during education process may ease this period. Another suggestion of this study is that Ministry of Educations' placement system should be changed from using age criterion to readiness level and educational background criteria. Studies about school and parent cooperation, shows that mothers have more communication with schools (Polovina, 2013). For this reason to make the school more attractive for the mothers could be a strategy. Activities like mothers' day or mothers' party can be useful to provide awareness to mothers who cannot communicate Due to the lack of language skills and to ones who do not understand the importance of school and parent interaction. As a result the main suggestion of this study is that Ministry of Education should determine policies regarding migrant students and plan a proper training suitable to these policies. This study is limited with the statements of teachers who train migrant students in city of Tokat. For this reason the findings of the study cannot be generalized but can show direction to other studies in the future.

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