ANALYZING PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' THEORITICAL BACKGROUND OF TEACHING READING

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ÖZ

Okuma becerisi insan hayatında olması gereken önemli bir beceridir. Akademik başarı ile birlikte, bireyin kişisel gelişimi ve ekonomik bağımsızlığını kazanması açısından gereklidir. Araştırmacılar kazanılan okuma becerisinin, ilkokul yıllarında edinilen en değerli eğitsel çıktı olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Okuma öğretim sürecinde özellikle ilkokul birinci, ikinci ve üçüncü sınıf öğretmenlerine büyük bir görev düşer. Çünkü bu sınıflarda eğitimin amacı okumayı öğretmek ve geliştirmek iken, ileriki yıllarda öğrenmek için okumaya başlanır. Tüm eğitsel etkinliklerde olduğu gibi, ilkokul öğretmenlerinin okumaya yönelik teorik alt yapısı, onların okuma etkinliklerinde etkili olmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı ilkokul öğretmenlerinin okuma öğretimine yönelik alt yapısının analiz edilmesidir. Bu amaçla Aksaray İli merkez ilçesinde yer alan elli öğretmen çalışmaya dahil edilmiştir. Veri toplama aracı olarak İlkokul Okuma Öğretimi Anketi uygulanmıştır. Sonuçlar ilkokul öğretmenlerinin okuma öğretimine yönelik ilgili olabilecek bütün konularda olumlu bir düşünceye sahip olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu olumlu görüş çocuğun yeni kelimeleri okumadan önce bu kelimelerin çocuğa gösterilmesi konusunda daha düşük iken, bilinmeyen bir kelime ile karşılaşıldığında çocuğa önce ipuçlarının verilmesi konusunda daha yüksektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Okuma öğretimi, ilkokul, öğretmen

ABSTRACT

Reading is the vital prerequisite for school achievement and for eventual personal and economic success. It is necessary to acquire strong literacy skills to live a productive life. Reading does not constitute a skill that occurs naturally in an individual. Teachers teaching at all levels of the school system know that reading is important. . In recent years, research concerning the relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices is drawing increased attention. The purpose of this study was to examine the primary school teachers' beliefs reflecting their theoretical background regarding to teaching reading. Data were collected using Primary School Teaching Reading Survey. Fifty primary school teacher involved in the study. Results indicate that primary school teachers have a positive background for all items of the teaching reading. Among these items, teachers reported the less positive belief for introducing new words before the children meets with them and the most positive belief was the giving clues to the children when they meet with the unfamiliar words.

Keywords: Teaching reading, primary school, teacher

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is the vital prerequisite for school achievement and for eventual personal and economic success. It is necessary to acquire strong literacy skills to live a productive life. Almost all academicians agree that learning how to read is the most important achievement of a child's early elementary school experience (Akyol, 2005; Anderson, 1994).

Reading does not constitute a skill that occurs naturally in an individual. Rather, learning to read is a cognitive and linguistic skill, and can usually be acquired through external support. It is linguistic since it is learnt using certain areas of the brain during the processing of language. It is also cognitive for as much as the existing cognitive reserves of the brain are used during learning to read. Therefore, learning to read has a cognitive-linguistic structure (Shaywitz, 2003). Children start to learn reading

in primary school. Between first grades to third grades, successful reading is particularly considered as a proficiency in itself. Reading skill is expected to be achieved by students because they need to obtain information using their reading skills especially in the fourth and fifth grades. It can be plainly said that children learn to read from early childhood education era to third grade and after that, they start reading to learn. Hence, after students graduate from primary schools, it is necessary that they have high level of reading skills to be able to do well in literature, social studies, science, and other subjects (Vaughn et al., 2015; Green, 1995).

Teachers teaching at all levels of the school system know that reading is important. They know that students who cannot read well is certain to encounter difficulty in school subjects. Only the students who succeeds in learning to read will find other school subjects accessible. In recent years, research concerning the relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices is drawing increased attention. Studies regarding to teacher beliefs are shaped around how their practices are influenced by their thinking. Because teaching is a process guided by thought and judgements and also include high-level decision-making activity. The thinking of a teacher constitutes a large part of the psychological context of teaching and that practice is substantially influenced and even determined by that teacher's underlying thinking (Isenberg, 1990; Clarke & Peterson, 1986).

Teachers have reasons for what they believe works, and these reasons reflect their theoretical background. Teachers hold implicit theories about the learning to read process and often behave in ways that validate this backround. However, teachers have not thought about whether practices are logically related to each other and how practices relate to their theoretical background (Gove,1983; Mgqwashu and Makhathini, 2017). For this reason reflectively examining teachers' beliefs is essential for teachers to integrate their theoretical knowledge and with their instructional behavior. The purpose of this study was to examine the primary school teachers' beliefs reflecting their theoretical background regarding to teaching reading.

2. METHODOLOGY

One of the quantitative methods scanning model was used in this research. Screening model is a research approach that aims to describe the past or existing situation as it is (Karasar, 2005). This study aims to describe primary school teachers' beliefs regarding to teaching reading. Data were collected using Primary School Teaching Reading Survey (PSTS). PSTS was developed using a content analysis approach. The studies of primary school teachers' theoretical background on teaching reading were analyzed (DeFord, 1985; Elliot-Johns, 2004; Nargül, 2006). The items of the PSTS were established and sent to three specialists. The finalized form of PSTS was completed with 10 items employing as five point scale (1-strongly disagree; 2-disagree, 3-undecided, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree).

Table 1. Distribution of primary school teachers

Grade	n	%
1'st	20	40
2'nd	15	30
3'rd	15	30
Total	**50**	**100**

The participants were 50 primary school teachers from Aksaray City, teaching at first, second and third grade classrooms. Participants were randomly selected among primary school teachers volunteered to involve to the study based on stratified sampling. The participants worked independently to provide chosen responses and there was no time constraint for the completion of the survey. The arithmetic means and standard deviations of answers were analyzed descriptively using SPSS 15.

3. FINDINGS

Primary school teachers reported their agreement level of teaching reading. Means and standard deviations of theoretical background of teaching reading are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Theoretical background items of teaching reading

	Item	$\overline{x}$	σ
1	A child needs to be able to verbalize the phonics to get proficiency in processing of words	4.32	0.32
2	An increase in reading errors is usually related to a decrease in comprehension	4.40	0.34
3	Dividing words into syllables is a helpful instructional practice for reading new words	4.42	0.34
4	The use of a dictionary is necessary in determining the meaning of new words	4.22	0.31
5	It is a good practice to correct a child when an oral reading mistake is made	4.42	0.34
6	Paying close attention to punctuation marks is necessary to understand the story content	4.30	0.28
7	When there is an unknown word, the reader should be encouraged using clues	4.56	0.41
8	Children's initial encounters with print should focus on meaning, not upon exact graphic representation	3.94	0.32
9	It is necessary to introduce new words before they appear in the reading text	3.80	0.30
10	Children needs tangible materials to understand the abstract concepts	4.44	0.35
	Overall mean	3.84	-

Note: 5-point scale (1-strongly disagree; 2-disagree, 3-undecided, 4-agree, 5-strongly agree)

Table 1 presents primary school teachers' agreement level in theoretical background of teaching reading. When we analyze the theoretical background items, primary school teachers reported that they were in agreement with the item '*a child needs to be able to verbalize the phonics to get proficiency in processing of words*' (4.32), '*an increase in reading errors is usually related to a decrease in comprehension*' (4.40), '*dividing words into syllables is a helpful instructional practice for reading new words*' (4.42), '*the use of a dictionary is necessary in determining the meaning of new words*' (4.22), '*it is a good practice to correct a child when an oral reading mistake is made*' (4.42), '*Paying close attention to punctuation marks is necessary to understand the story content*' (4.30), '*when there is an unknown word, the reader should be encouraged using clues*' (4.56), '*children's initial encounters with print should focus on meaning not upon exact graphic representation*' (3.94), '*it is necessary to introduce new words before they appear in the reading text*' (3.80), '*children needs tangible materials to understand the abstract concepts*' (4.44). Primary school teachers overall mean score for PSTS was 3.84.

Findings showed that primary school teachers was in agreement with all the teaching reading theoretical background items at different levels. Among these items, teachers' agreement level was low when it comes to introducing new words before the students encounter with them. They tend to introduce the new words when student did not understand the word. Primary school teachers correct students' mistakes when the student make an oral reading mistake or when the teacher understands that the student did not understand the meaning. Because of this practice, they may not interested in introducing the new words before reading the text. They give less importance for students' success in recognizing graphic representation comparing to understanding the meaning of the word. Teachers also stress reading errors of students when it comes to comprehension.

4. CONCLUSIONS

It has been stated that the individual teacher is key to any educational reform and their beliefs are critical aspect of such change (Olson & Singer, 1994). It is also same for the teaching reading activities as well. Nevertheless, they are often unaware of how their beliefs about teaching specific subjects, or about teaching overall, affect the kinds of changes they might make.

This study showed that primary school teachers had positive position towards the different aspects of teaching reading. In her similar study, Armstead (2015) found that primary school teachers considered that all the teaching practices were to be important. Current study also found that primary school teachers' beliefs were positively strong concerning the reading and comprehension of children what they read. Several studies support the idea that primary school teachers give importance to true

understanding of the text or stories of students (Boonterarak, 2014; Mastrini-McAteer, 1997; Luciano, 1997). Besides this, current research indicated that oral reading of students were also negatively linked to the reading comprehension.

It can be concluded that primary school teachers' positive beliefs towards all teaching reading subjects should be extended to which primary school teachers use them as practices in their classrooms.

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