



EFFECT OF FILMS AND ROLE-PLAY AS TEACHING TOOLS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION COURSES ON PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' EMPATHIC TENDENCY AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSION

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This study aims to investigate whether a special education program using informative instruction together with role playing, films and videos has an effect on prospective teachers' empathic tendency and attitudes towards inclusion. The study employs a pretest-posttest experimental research design. Prospective teachers' empathic tendency and attitudes towards inclusion serve as the dependent variables, whereas the informative instruction, role-playing, films and videos serve as the independent variable. The research sample consists of 116 fourth-year students enrolled in the Teacher Training in Turkish and the Teacher Training in Sciences Departments of the Faculty of Education. These prospective teachers attended a 14-week course, two hours a week, consisting of aforementioned informative instruction, role-playing, films, videos, and discussions. Data were collected from the experimental groups in the beginning and following the completion of the course, using the Opinions Relative to Integration (ORI) scale, developed by Antonak and Larrivee (1982) and adapted to Turkish by Kircaali-Iftar (1992a), and the Empathic Tendency Scale developed by Dokmen (1988). Further information on prospective teachers was collected through forms developed by the researcher. The findings of the research showed that the course had a positive effect on prospective teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and empathy tendency.

Keywords: Empathy, Inclusion, Attitude change, Prospective teachers.

Introduction

The concept of empathy, although considered the essence of humanistic psychology, is rooted in the ancient Greek civilization (Duru, 2002). Empathy has both cognitive and affective components. Empathic response requires the child to be aware of a clear distinction between self and other, and to have the ability to take perspective of the other. In the absence of these, empathy becomes a passive reflection of the distress, merely serving to comfort oneself. At the age of two, affective and cognitive conditions necessary for empathy begin to develop (Kagan, 1981; Kagan & Lamb, 1987; Lamb, 1991; Zahn-Waxler, Robinson, & Emde, 1992; Yuksel, 2009). Dokmen (1998) defines empathy as the ability to view events from another's perspective by putting self in the shoes of that person, to accurately infer the feelings and thoughts of that person, and then to communicate this situation with that person. Dokmen (1998) also suggests that a person's empathic skills can be developed through education.

Teachers' ability to build empathic relationships with students is an essential skill for an effective education and learning system. Teachers are expected to hold positive attitudes towards students with different characteristics in a classroom to enable them to benefit from the education