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## The effect of elective courses on candidate teachers' level of social skills

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### Abstract

This research has been conducted for students in order to gain a complementary method, technique or skills, enrich the world view, carry out social service practice, help the participation in cultural and artistic activities, and sport and health activities, develop the environmental sensibility and research the effects of elective courses which are given to develop communication skills on social skills. Social Skills Inventory has been used in the research as medium of data collection. In this study it has been determined that social skills levels of candidate teachers taking an elective course like sports are higher than that of taking an elective course like education.

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*Keywords:* social skills, elective courses, candidate teachers;

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### 1. Introduction

Not being able to tell emotions and ideas easily considered as communication problems at the present day, not being able to making friendships, timidity in the relation with opposite sex, social communication and interaction limitations in school, work, family etc., have led the scientists to focus on the importance of social skills (Tegin, 1990). As social skills is defined as the behaviors' that make the communication possible with others, are socially acceptable and are learned; it regarded as a life-long service which improves the quality of life of individual, helps the achievement of aims (Yüksel, 1999). According to Sorias (1986), social skills is learned behaviors that eases the individual's establishing good relationships with others, telling his emotions as a whole, advocating personal rights, asking for help from others and refusing the requests that he does not approve. Social skills is defined as the behaviors' that enable the individual to interact with others successfully (Bacanlı, 1999), interaction establishing skills which is useful for individual himself and others in social context (Combs and Slaby, 1977), abilities which are necessary for an effective communication between people (Branstain et al., 1977), skills of dealing with probable conflicts by using appropriate communication ways and adaptation to social environment (Matson, Matson and Rivet, 2007), skills of demonstrating necessary behaviors' for individual to be successful in social life.

Among social skills, there are academic performance, cooperation, starting social interaction, boldness, communication skills, problem solving performance and skills of sufficiency in social way (Yüksel, 1997). It is considered that academic performance in the process of learning is determined by the success obtained from compulsory and elective courses in curriculum. While the knowledge of students is tried to level up with

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compulsory courses, to gain a complementary method, technique or skill, enrich the world view, carry out social service practice, help the participation in cultural and artistic activities, and sport and health activities, develop the environmental sensibility and improve communication skills with elective courses are aimed. It is contemplated that elective courses have an effect on developing social skills. In this context, the below are the sub-problems of the research:

- 1) What is the level of social skills of candidate teachers?
- 2) Is there a meaningful relationship between the success obtained from elective courses that candidate teachers preferred and social skills?
- 3) Do elective courses that candidate teachers preferred have an effect on social skills?

## 2. Method

Relational survey method was used in the study. Relational survey method is the model aiming to explain the existence and level of change between two or more variables (Karasar, 2005). Study group of research is composed of 93 students who study at Hacettepe University, Faculty of Education. The data in the study is collected by “Social Skills Inventory”. Social Skills Inventory was first developed by Riggio (1986). The study of Turkish adaptation of the scale was done by Yüksel (1997). “Social Skills Inventory” which is five point likert type instruments is composed of 90 items. The scale consists of 6 sub-dimensions; these are “Emotional Expressivity”, “Emotional Sensitivity”, “Emotional Control”, “Social Expressivity”, “Social Sensitivity” and “Social Control”. For the whole scale co-efficient of reliability relating to total score calculated with the method of test-repeat-test has been found 0,92. Co-efficient of reliability acquired from sub-scales are 0,81 for Emotional Expressivity, 0,87 for Emotional Sensitivity, 0,80 for Emotional Control, 0,89 for Social Expressivity, 0,88 for Social Sensitivity and 0,89 for Social Control. Co-efficient of inner coherency relating to total score of inventory has been found 0.85. Co-efficient of inner coherency by sub-scales are 0,56 for Emotional Expressivity, 0,80 for Emotional Sensitivity, 0,75 for Emotional Control, 0,82 for Social Expressivity, 0,72 for Social Sensitivity and 0,81 for Social Control (Yüksel, 1997). Social skills levels of candidate teachers have been primarily researched in the study. Then, the relationship between social skills and elective courses has been examined. It has been observed that candidate teachers have taken different elective courses. The elective courses that the candidate teachers have taken, have been classified as the elective courses consisting of physical activities, the elective courses supporting department courses and the elective courses consisting of cultural activities. The elective course grades of candidate teachers have been recorded and the grade of candidate teacher who got A1 or A2 form an elective course has been coded 3, for B1 or B2 the code is 2 and for C1 the code is 1.

## 3. Results

### *Levels of social skills of candidate teachers;*

Descriptive analysis of data obtained from the inventory to determine the levels of social skills of candidate teachers has been done. The result of the analysis is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Analysis results relating to levels of social skills of candidate teachers

	N	$\bar{X}$	S
Emotional Expressivity	93	3,1039	,36162
Emotional Sensitivity	93	3,5749	,36021
Emotional Control	93	2,8717	,41590
Social Expressivity	93	3,2201	,44945
Social Sensitivity	93	3,2301	,41430
Social Control	93	3,4337	,53239
Total	93	3,2391	,21691

While the grades acquired from social skills inventory is interpreted, it has been stated as a general criterion that grades obtained from total and sub scales, being high in all sub scales is an indication of high social skill, being low

is an indication of low social skill (Yüksel, 2004). Accordingly, when Table 1 is examined, it can be said that levels of social skill of candidate teachers are high. As the averages of grades of candidate teachers that they got from social skills sub scales are examined, it is seen that the average of Emotional Sensitivity is the highest.

*The relationship between social skills and elective course success;*

Correlation analysis has been done to detect the relationship between social skills and elective course success of candidate teachers. The results of analysis are given in Table 2.

Table 2. The Relationship between social skill and elective course success of candidate teachers

		Social Skills	Achievement in Elective Courses
<b>Social Skills</b>	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,112
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,283
	N	93	93
<b>Achievement in Elective Courses</b>	Correlation Coefficient	,112	1,000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,283	.
	N	93	93

The relationship between social skills and elective course success of candidate teachers is positive, it is understood that correlation coefficients are not statistically significant ( $r=0,112$ ,  $p>0,05$ ).

*Effect of elective courses on social skills;*

The relationship between elective course success of candidate teachers taking different elective courses under the names of physical activities, courses supporting department courses and cultural activities has been examined with variance analysis and the results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of variance analysis relating to elective courses' effect on social skills level

Type of Elective Courses	N	$\bar{X}$	sd	F	p	Significant Difference
Sport	27	3,2893	2	3,611	,031	Sport-Education
Education	29	3,1525	90			
Culture	37	3,2703				
Total	93	3,2391				

Analysis results have shown that there is a significant difference in terms of elective course kind taken between social skills levels of candidate teachers ( $F=3,611$ ,  $p<,05$ ). In other words, social skills levels of candidate teachers change meaningfully depending on the kind of elective course that they take. According to results of Tukey test which is applied to find between which groups lies the difference, it has been determined that social skills levels of candidate teachers taking sports are higher than those of taking educational courses.

#### 4. Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, it is aimed to detect the social skills levels of candidate teachers, at the relationship between social skills and elective course success and to research whether social skills level change depending on the kind of elective course. According to analysis results obtained from social skills inventory, it has been determined that social skills levels of candidate teachers are high. It has been found out that inventory of average of emotional sensitivity sub-dimension of candidate teachers are the highest. Emotional sensitivity means individuals' receiving non-oral messages of others and analysis skills. Individuals having emotional sensitivity analyze non-oral emotional messages of other individuals accurately, entirely and fast, and can state the emotional situations emphatically (Yüksel, 2004). These features emphasize the most important quality that a teacher should have. Hence, it can be concluded that candidate teachers having high emotional sensibility establish a successful relationship with their students in their professional life.

The aim of elective courses are for students to gain supporting knowledge, technique or skills, know different cultures, to carry out social service practice, help the participation in cultural, artistic, sports and health activities, improve sensibility of environment and develop communication skills. When the aims of elective courses are taken

into consideration, elective courses are the courses aiming at improving the individuals in socially and culturally. It is expected that there should be a relationship between social skills and the success acquired from these courses. Therefore, the relationship between social skills and elective course success has been investigated and it has been stated that this relationship is at low level. According to this finding, it can be inferred that social skills increases a little as elective course success increases. A positive meaningful relationship has been detected in the studies (Yüksel, 1997; William, 2004; Koç et al., 2004; Karayurt and Akyol, 2008; DiTommaso, McNulty, Ross & Burgess, 2003) in which the relationships between social skills and academic success have been researched. Strahan (2003) has stated in his study examining the effects of social phobia and social skills on academic performance that lack of social skills can lead to low success. In the student interviews to determine the reason of low relationship between social skills and social skills courses that have an important effect on academic success, it is noteworthy that candidate teachers took elective courses mostly to increase their grades and they did not find these courses socially beneficial for themselves.

The weak relationship between elective course success and social skills has led us to research whether social skills levels of candidate teachers change depending on the kind of elective course that they took. Hence, according to the result of variance analysis, it has been found out that social skill levels of candidate teachers taking elective courses like sports are higher than those of taking department courses. Tezcan and Gümüş (2008) have detected in their study that students did not think about the contributions of elective courses to their professional career while choosing them; instead, they gave importance to their personal interests, personal abilities, currency of courses, courses' contribution to their personal and academic development and they preferred the courses that they took before and became successful in. They have found out that the content of the courses is effective in selection of elective courses. It can be concluded that the contents of elective courses like department courses and flow of the course are like compulsory courses and, as a result, their contribution to development of social skills of candidate teachers is lesser than sports and cultural courses.

For individuals to have healthy interpersonal communication and in family and school life, social skills have an important effect (Deniz, 2002). The children having social skills enjoy the activities that they participate more and they decide themselves (Çetin et al., 2003). The researches have revealed that social skills, personal features such as extraversion, emotional stability and comprehensibility, conscious of team work have an effect on performance (Morgeson, Reider and Campion, 2005) and have advantages like acceptance by peers, adaptation to school, having academic success, perceiving his personality positively, developing positive interpersonal relations (Gresham, 1986). In the frame of pedagogical courses of teachers, studies should be conducted to apprehend the importance of social skills in the individuals' lives.

To realize having social ability (Becker, Heimberg & Bellack, 1987) that is explained as expressing the emotions easily, helping the others to express their emotions, evaluating at the appropriate time and place, what teachers can do in the frame of guidance course should be discussed.

A teacher needs social skills while organizing activities including the whole class, planning the course by making the student active, organizing group activities, adapting to the atmosphere when his plans go wrong or something unexpected happens, expressing his emotions and ideas, communicating with students and other personnel (Yüksel, 2001), questioning how he will solve problems (Merrell & Gimpell, 1997). As the teacher is the person who guides the students' lives, social quality is important as well as cognitive quality. The researches have revealed that the activities done to develop social skills improve the students' social skills (Yüksel, 1997; Yüksel, 1998; Altunbaş, 2002; Steen, 2007; Karahan, 2008; Gülaçtı, 2009) and teacher support affects the students' social skills. Therefore, the teacher should plan his course in a way that develops the students' social skills.

The studies in which the relationship between social skill and academic success is examined have shown that lack of social skill affects readiness negatively for success (Furnham, 1991). Therefore, activities relating to developing social skills can be done in the frame of special teaching methods.

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