



## IMPACT OF CO-TEACHING APPROACH IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SETTINGS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING SKILLS

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### ABSTRACT

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This study was conducted on three students with special education needs and their 16 non-disabled classmates in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of an elementary school in Cyprus where inclusive education is offered to them and their parents. In the mentioned inclusive education setting, student and parent opinions with regard to the effectiveness of reading comprehension applications based on a one teacher one assistant model, which is a co-teaching model, conducted by the classroom teacher and special education teacher, have been evaluated. For this purpose, opinions have been obtained from students during the application that consisted of 14 sessions between October 2017 and January 2018 and from parents after the applications with regard to the effectiveness of the co-teaching practice using semi-structured interview forms. When the research findings were evaluated, it was seen that the students felt happy, successful and academically prepared during the co-teaching practices, they found the materials used by their teachers interesting, they were willing to attend the class, and were pleased to be in the school / classroom environment. When the findings of the parents' opinions were evaluated, the parents stated that they had some concerns prior to the co-teaching practices were implemented. However, they stated that the variety of materials and homework used during the practices and seeing their child's academic progress made parents feel at ease with the new approach. The parents also stated that the reading skills of their children had improved, their willingness to read had improved and their writing skills had improved as well.

**Contribution/Originality:** This study contributes in the existing literature in terms of reflecting on the perspectives of both parents and students on the effectiveness of co-teaching. It is assumed that not only children with special needs but also children with normal development will benefit from co-teaching. In particular, it is believed that families, who are key stakeholders in special education, will develop increased awareness regarding the actions they can take to support the development of their children.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education settings where students with special needs are educated along with their non-disable peers have the highest constructive impact on their academic as well as social skills. In inclusive education environments, to the aim is to increase the efficiency of the students with special needs and their peers in the courses by making adaptations to the teaching materials and instruction Inclusive education environments aim to increase the efficiency of both the students with special needs and their peers who don't have special needs by adapting teaching materials and teaching methods (York *et al.*, 1992; Tichenor *et al.*, 2000; Magiera *et al.*, 2005; Akcamete and

Gökbulut, 2018). The impact of delivering special education based on a multi-disciplinary approach is important. This effect can be manifested by class teachers acting in cooperation with field experts, school management, other teachers and / or families to meet the possible needs and to solve the problems that may arise during inclusive applications. The quality of communication and interaction with such fundamental stakeholders of inclusive education plays an effective role in the academic success of inclusion and the satisfaction of both teachers and students. The quality of communication and interaction with the primary stakeholders of inclusive education plays an active role both in achieving success and in making teachers and students happy (Mulholland and O'Connor, 2016; Pancsofar and Petroff, 2016; Shin *et al.*, 2016; Jurkowski and Müller, 2018).

Ceplak (2012) claimed that education is an investment in the future of individuals and providing favorable education to children, who represent the future generation, is the key to securing their future and their success in life. From this perspective, the interaction between the classroom teacher and special education teacher in particular is considered to be essential in the development of students. In the literature, the models and approaches in which these interactions are established in different ways have been mentioned. One of these approaches is the co-teaching approach, which is stated to be highly effective in inclusive education environments.

In the co-teaching approach, classroom teachers and special education teachers work collaboratively in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the courses to be carried out in an integrated educational environment, and actively perform their roles and responsibilities based on active sharing (Cook and Friend, 1995; Gable *et al.*, 2000; Murawski and Dieker, 2008). In this approach, there are several different teaching models in which the arrangements in the teaching environment and the roles that the teachers will undertake are designed in different ways. These teaching models are not considered to be superior to each other. The examples are one teacher, one observation model, station teaching model, parallel teaching model, alternative teaching model, team teaching model and the one teacher one assistant model (Arguelles *et al.*, 2000; Gable *et al.*, 2000; Thousand *et al.*, 2006; Murawski and Dieker, 2008; Friend and Cook, 2016).

In the literature, the gains of co-teaching approaches applied in inclusive teaching settings on teachers, non-disabled peers and students under academic and social risk or students with special needs are emphasised (Marston, 1996; Walther-Thomas, 1997; Bouck, 2007). According to the findings in the literature review; teachers who apply co-teaching approaches gain professional experience and job satisfaction; peers without disability, have the opportunity to become acquainted with different teaching materials and students who are in the risk group or students with special needs benefit from it by improving their academic achievements and increasing their self-confidence through instructional adaptations which are appropriate to their individual learning speed and forms (Tichenor *et al.*, 2000; Pancsofar and Petroff, 2016).

Monitoring the academic development recorded by the students with special needs / risk group students and supporting this by their families helps to make the learned information permanent and generalized. Monitoring the academic progress recorded by students with special needs / risk groups helps to persist and generalize the learned information; especially when this is supported by the families of these students. The views of the family about the teaching practices carried out in the classroom contribute to teachers in terms of the success of the practices, the determination of their strengths and weaknesses and the increased academic success of students (Epstein, 1985; Tichenor *et al.*, 2000; Hill *et al.*, 2004; Sanders and Epstein, 2005; Hill and Tyson, 2009; Newland *et al.*, 2013; Bo *et al.*, 2018).

The literature on co-teaching practices covers topics such as the success of co-teaching applications, assessment of the opinions and attitudes of teachers and pre-service teachers about the application, the efficiency of the application for students, and the determination of the strengths and weaknesses of the application. However, studies involving the self-evaluation of parents and/or students on co-teaching applications are less frequent (Wallace *et al.*, 2002; Griffin *et al.*, 2006; Wilson, 2016). The evaluation of co-teaching practices from the point of view of the family and students gives researchers the opportunity to explore the key points that need to be strengthened or be

developed in the application and to evaluate the impacts of the practice through different sources., The subject of the research was identified as the determination of the opinions of students and parents about the effects of co-teaching practices in inclusive educational environments.

### *1.1. Objective of the Study*

In the first years of elementary education in particular, reading skills are very important in every classroom in which inclusive education is applied. Reading comprehension skills are essential in both the academic lives of students and their extra-school life. Reading comprehension skills are important both in students' academic lives and in their extracurricular lives. Children need to actively use their reading skills in order to achieve and maintain academic success in all subjects and to extend their achievements to extra-school life (Zimmermann and Hutchins, 2003; Güneşli, 2007; Moreillon, 2013; Akçamete and Gökbulut, 2018). Although special needs students are often able to learn to read, it is seen that the difficulties they face in reading comprehension, which is another important stage in reading, affect their academic performance negatively and this regression continues in the educational years that follow. In inclusive education settings, it is thought to be beneficial for teachers to plan all courses related to the comprehension of reading on the basis of individual differences in order improve the self-confidence of students. In this way, students with special needs can have command of the texts they read and can perceive and interpret the messages.

The general objective of the study was to evaluate the opinions of students and parents with regard to co-teaching applications, which were conducted with the purpose of improving reading skills based on the one teacher one assistant model, which is a co-teaching approach model, in a Turkish language class delivered by a classroom teacher and special education teacher to a 2nd grade class of an inclusive education elementary school consisting of 3 students and 16 non-disabled students. The opinions of students were obtained during the application and the opinions of parents were obtained when the applications were finalised with regard to their effectiveness. In this research, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What is the opinion of the students participating in co-teaching practices about;
  - a) Their willingness to attend classes?
  - b) Their opinions of the approaches teachers had and how they dealt with the materials?
  - c) Their level of attention?
  - d) Their opinions about their level of success?
  - e) Having two teachers in the classroom?
2. What is the opinion of the families of the students who participated in the co-teaching practices on;
  - a) The impact on the reading skills of the children?
  - b) The impact on the attitude and willingness of their children towards reading?
  - c) Whether reading education studies increase the efficiency,
  - d) On the quality of the practices carried out before and after the program?

### *1.2. Importance of the Study*

The involvement and participation of families in their children's educational programs has a significant impact on the permanence and generalization of the skills to be taught. The feedback obtained from the families and students about the training programs enabled the teachers to determine the efficiency, strengths and weaknesses of the program being implemented and thus to identify the basic aspects that needed to be developed. Literature review reveals that there is plenty of research on inclusive education practices which concentrate on the perspective of different stakeholders such as family, students, teachers, school administration, parents, supervisors; however, not many studies exist on the opinions of families and students about co-teaching practices. With this in mind, the opinions of the families of these students on the effectiveness of the program and the opinions of non-disabled

students about the co-teaching practices offered in cooperation between the special education teacher and the classroom teacher in the inclusive classes in Northern Cyprus have been examined. The results of the study are considered to be important in terms of reflecting on the effectiveness of co-teaching practices in Northern Cyprus in particular and in the literature in general. Based on the literature review, no other similar study was found in the Turkish literature. It can be said that the program to improve reading comprehension that was conducted by using co-teaching approach is original in the Turkish literature. It is thought that the findings of this study will contribute to the literature in terms of reflecting on the perspectives of both parents and students. It is assumed that not only children with special needs but also children with normal development will benefit from this approach. In particular, it is believed that families, who are key stakeholders in special education, will develop increased awareness regarding the actions they can take to support the development of their children.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Research Design

A case study, which is a qualitative research method, was implemented for this study. Cases can emerge in several ways. An individual, an institution, a group or a setting can be examples of cases that can be studied (Yildirim and Simşek, 2006). This study was carried out in an elementary school which offers inclusive education affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

The case study was used to illustrate the views of students and families in depth. The aim of the study was to examine a current topic in the private education sector (co-teaching) for the first time in Cyprus. As co-teaching had not been a practice administered in Cyprus prior to this study, the objective was to access the initial experiences of students and families about the implementation. The data collected about the initial experiences obtained from this research was to be compared with the experienced countries that previously carried out co-teaching.

### 2.2. Study Group

The study group of this research was formed by using the purposeful sampling method. Purposeful sampling is a method that allows the study of situations that are believed to be rich in information (Yildirim and Simşek, 2006). In this study, convenience sampling, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used. This sampling method gives speed and practicality to research because in this method, the researcher chooses a situation that is close and easy to access (Yildirim and Simşek, 2006). In this study, a total of 19 students (3 families with special needs) and their families (19 families) in the second grade of a primary school affiliated to with the Ministry of National Education in Northern Cyprus were examined. Of the volunteer participants, none of the students had repeated a grade, 9 of the 19 participants were male and 10 were female, 3 of 9 the male participants were males with special needs, the other participants were peers with no disability and all of the participants were 7 years old. Although the students with special needs appeared cheerful and extroverted, they seemed to be shy and reluctant to attend classes. The other students with no special needs accepted their special needs peers, were willing to participate in the classes and were self-confident. Of the parents participating, 3 were parents of students with special needs and the others were parents of students with normal development. All of the participant parents were mothers. 12 of the mothers graduated from high school, 4 from university and 3 from secondary school. The mean age of the participating mothers was 36.

### 2.3. Data Collection Tool

Three data collection tools were used in the study. The explanations of the features of these tools are as follows. One of these tools is a structured Control Chart for Determining Students' Opinions. The students are expected to mark their views about the course at the end of each session. The students (both with special needs and without disabilities) reflect their views on the courses taught by marking one of the yes-no-not sure statements on

the form. This control chart which was developed in line with the program objectives and the literature review consists of 8 items with 3 options. Among these items were; "willingness to attend the course", "interest in the ways and materials used by the teachers", "the joy the students felt during the course", "assessment of course achievement", "the level of comfort with the teachers who co-teach" and "the level of comprehension of the courses which are co-taught". The students' opinions about co-teaching practices were analyzed by converting the ratio obtained to percentage values by calculating the frequency of the total number of times they marked 'a lot - a little - not sure' as answers for the questions posed at them after each session for the duration of 14 weeks. The students' opinions about co-educational practices were analyzed by converting the ratio obtained to percentage values by calculating the frequency of the total number of times they marked 'a lot - a little - not sure' as answers for the questions posed at them after each session for the duration of 14 weeks. The qualitative data on the views of the parents of the class in which these practices were conducted were obtained in two different ways. First, prior to the beginning of the 14-week program, an approval document was sent to the parents to obtain their permission for the application and an information form, which explained the objective of the application and its stages in detail was also sent. Initial data was obtained by means of the data collection tool called the Parent Opinion Assessment Tool for Co-teaching-1, consisting of three semi-structured questions, which were attached to the form to determine the views of families about this program. Another important qualitative data collection tool for parents, which was the Parent Opinion Assessment Tool for Co-teaching-2, was prepared for the purpose of obtaining qualitative data on the family opinions about the implementation and its effects after the end of the co-teaching practices conducted in the classroom for 14 weeks. After the completion of the application, a questionnaire consisting of three open-ended semi-structured questions in which "the effect on reading comprehension skills", "the attitude and readiness to read" and contribution to the efficiency of reading education" was assessed was sent to the parents.

Both the students and their families were asked to individually answer the data collection tools used during the research to determine their views on co-teaching. The questions in the data collection tools were arranged so as to be easily understood by the participants and explanatory tips were prepared to prevent the questions from being misunderstood. In order to obtain opinions on the quality of the questions in the tools, three special education field experts and one measuring-evaluation expert were consulted, in addition to one Turkish language teaching expert to assess the comprehensibility of the wording. In line with the feedback obtained from the examinations performed by these experts, the tools were restructured and finalized.

#### *2.4. Collection of Data*

Prior to collecting the research data, the purpose of the study and the method to be followed was explained to the students and parents participating in the research. Their participation in the study was obtained on a voluntary basis. The interviews were held once a week between October 2017 and January 2018 (for 14 weeks) during the 2017-2018 academic year and the implementation was carried out according to the schedule in the table summarized in [Annex 1](#). At the end of each co-teaching session, students were asked to fill in the structured forms (Control Chart for Determining Student Opinions), which were presented to them to evaluate the co-teaching practices implemented during the day. The findings were obtained from the parents of the students by asking them to complete two different data collection tools (Parent Opinion Assessment Tool for Co-teaching-1 and Parent Opinion Assessment Tool for Co-teaching-2) consisting of three questions each, which were sent prior to the beginning of the co-teaching sessions and at the end of the 14th week.

#### *2.5. Analysis of Data*

Research data were analysed using the Descriptive Analysis Method, which is a qualitative data analysis method. While analysing the student opinions on co-teaching applications, the frequency of yes, no, and not sure expressions marked by students for the 14 weeks were calculated and transformed into percentage values. When

calculating the opinions of the 3 students with special education needs on co-teaching practices, the summation of the responses given for each dimension in the control chart (14 weeks in total) was recorded as 52. Based on this total score, the total sum of answers given to yes-no-not sure options were determined for 14 weeks and their percentages were calculated. For example, in the “willingness to participate in the class” dimension, the sum of the answers given by the three students to the “yes” option was calculated as 30, the sum of the answers given to the “no” option was calculated as 20 and the sum of the answers given to the “not sure” option was calculated as 2. In this case, the percentages for each of the options were calculated separately (using as the formula  $x/52 \cdot 100$ ) and then tabulated. Similarly, the same procedure was applied to the 16 non-disabled students. The formula for non-disabled students was determined using the formula  $x/224 \cdot 100$ . Accordingly, 100% value reflects the highest level and 0% reflects the lowest level in the statements used by the students 14 times during each application. In conclusion, in each column, the answers of students with special needs and non-disabled students are presented side by side to allow comparison.

While analysing the views of the students’ parents on co-teaching applications, the data obtained from the parents were analysed using the content analysis technique. Content analysis is defined as summarising a text with smaller content categories with certain encodings (Büyüköztürk *et al.*, 2010). Categorical analysis, which is a type of content analysis, was used in this study as it was deemed to be suitable for the objectives. In general, categorical analysis is expressed as the division of a certain message and then grouping of the resulting units into categories based on certain criteria (Bilgin, 2006).

While analysing the data, categorical analysis was employed as follows: codes were prepared from the answers given to each question, similar encodings were collected under the same group, relevant categories/themes were prepared, the frequencies of the determined categories were found and the findings were then tabulated. To ensure the anonymity of the participants whose responses and opinions were telling in the interviews, the letter code P (Parent) and a sequence number was assigned to them when direct quotations were provided in the study.

### 2.6. Validity-Reliability

Validity: In the study, the data obtained from students and parents were transcribed in detail and the method used to obtain findings was expressed in a clear and understandable manner. Direct quotations of the opinions of students and parents who participated in the study were frequently included in the study and the findings of the study were based on participant opinions. It was seen that research findings were consistent and meaningful in themselves and in harmony with the conceptual framework. The researchers who conducted the study evaluated the findings with a critical viewpoint and interpreted them in regard to whether the findings reflected reality.

Reliability: The researchers avoided directing the student and parent interviewees. In the study, the differences that could occur between the researchers regarding the data obtained through interviews and their analysis have been minimized by having two of the researchers conduct the analysis process of the study, and having the other researcher evaluate whether the analysis reflects the data. In order to ensure the internal reliability of the analysis in the study, the answers given by 19 participant parents to a question (See Findings Table 2) were evaluated separately by two researchers and the consistency between the themes identified by the researchers was examined. A calculation was made according to the (Miles and Huberman, 1994) formula (Reliability = agreement / disagreement + agreement), namely  $(28/28+6)$  and the consistency between data processors was found to be 82 percent. As the 70% consistency threshold was exceeded in the study, it was concluded that the data analysis was reliable.

## 3. RESULTS

The research results are presented under two headings. In the first section, the views of the students are given and the opinions of the parents are discussed in the second section.

## A. Student views on co-teaching practices.

Table-1. Student views on co-teaching practices.

| Items  | Responses and percentage equivalents |                |                |                   |                |                |
|--|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
|  | Students with special needs          |                |                | Non-disable peers |                |                |
|  | Yes                                  | No             | Not sure       | Yes               | No             | Not sure       |
| I was willing to participate in today's class.   | n:49<br>(98%)                        | n:1<br>(1.92%) | n:2<br>(3.84%) | n:224<br>(100%)   | n:0<br>(0%)    | n:0<br>(0%)    |
| The study handouts used by both teachers during the class helped me understand the topic better.           | n:50<br>(96.1%)                      | n:0<br>(0%)    | n:2<br>(3.84%) | n:223<br>(99.55%) | n:0<br>(0%)    | n:1<br>(0.45%) |
| I enjoyed today's class.   | n:52<br>(100%)                       | n:0<br>(0%)    | n:0<br>(0%)    | n:224<br>(100%)   | n:0<br>(0%)    | n:0<br>(0%)    |
| Methods and the study handouts used by the teachers during the class attracted my attention.               | n:48<br>(92.3%)                      | n:1<br>(1.92%) | n:3<br>(5.76%) | n:222<br>(99.10%) | n:1<br>(0.45%) | n:1<br>(0.45%) |
| I think that I was successful in today's class.  | n:51<br>(98.1%)                      | n:0<br>(0%)    | n:1<br>(1.90%) | n:221<br>(98.66%) | n:1<br>(0.45%) | n:2<br>(0.89%) |
| Both teachers lecturing simultaneously at today's class made me feel comfortable.                          | n:51<br>(98.1%)                      | n:0<br>(0%)    | n:1<br>(1.90%) | n:221<br>(98.66%) | n:1<br>(0.45%) | n:2<br>(0.89%) |
| Both teachers lecturing simultaneously at today's class made sure that I understood the class more easily. | n:51<br>(98.1%)                      | n:0<br>(0%)    | n:1<br>(1.90%) | n:221<br>(98.66%) | n:0<br>(0.45%) | n:2<br>(0.89%) |
| I would like both teachers to lecture in all classes in this way.  | n:52<br>(100%)                       | n:0<br>(0%)    | n:0<br>(0%)    | n:224<br>(100%)   | n:0<br>(0%)    | n:0<br>(0%)    |

As can be seen in Table 1 98% of the students with special needs responded to the item with regard to their willingness to participate in classes as “yes I was willing to”, 1.92% answered as “no I was not willing to” and 3.84% answered as “I am not sure”. A comparison of the answers of both student groups shows that in general, both student groups showed high levels of willingness to participate in classes. Although a higher number of students with special needs answered “yes”, some of them marked “no” and “I am not sure” to the item “I was willing to attend the class”, which can be interpreted as an indicator of their inability to adapt to the co-teaching applications in the beginning as they had no prior experience of this approach. The level of the willingness of other students is thought to be due to their better learning by using materials adapted for students with special needs.

The students with special needs answered the question on the attractiveness of techniques and course materials used during teaching as “yes, they were interesting” with a percentage of 92.3%, “I am not sure” with a percentage of 5.76% and “no” with a percentage of 1.92%. On the other hand, 100% of the non-disabled peers gave the answer “yes, they were interesting” in response to the question examining the attractiveness of course materials and lecturing techniques. An examination of the answers of both groups shows that students with special needs exhibited indecisiveness or negativity, albeit negligible, towards the course materials and lecturing techniques, which can be interpreted as them having a lack familiarity in the early weeks, but that they became accustomed to this different teaching method that was adjusted according to individual learning characteristics. It is also believed that the peers found the session where different teaching methods were used other than traditional teaching methods more interesting.

96.1% of students with special needs responded 'yes it helped' and 3.84% responded 'I'm not sure' to the question on whether the materials used by their teachers during the lesson helped them understand the lesson more easily. On the other hand, non-disabled students answered the question on whether the methods and materials used by the teachers during class helped them better understand the class as “yes” with a percentage of 99% and as “not sure” with a percentage of 0.45%. The significant proportion of “yes” responses from both groups implies that both groups think that the methods and techniques used during co-teaching applications were effective and helpful for

learning. The fact that the “not sure” option was marked by some students can be attributed to the possibility that these responses were given in the weeks when the co-teaching sessions had just started.

The data showed that both groups of students answered 100% ‘yes I enjoyed the course’ to the item that evaluated the enjoyment they got out of the course. A comparison of the answers given to the item which assessed whether students understood the class easily shows that 98.1% of students with special needs answered “yes I understood”, and 1.90% of students with special needs answered “no, I did not understand”. On the other hand, non-disabled students answered the same question as “yes, I understood” with a percentage of 98.66% and “no, I could not understand” with a percentage of 0.45%. The evaluation to the responses given by both groups of students showed that the enjoyment students got from the courses designed with instructional approaches and instructional arrangements had a positive impact on their learning and that they felt happy in the lessons which they understood clearly and easily. The low level of the answer “no” can be attributed to the view that as the weeks passed in the application process, the pleasure and motivation of both student groups increased parallel to which the percentage of “no” answer decreased.

An examination of the answers given by students to the question on the perceived success during the classes shows that students with special needs answered “yes” with a percentage of 98.1% and “not sure” with a percentage of 1.92%. When the ratios of the answers given by the students to the item evaluating finding themselves successful during the lessons were examined, it was observed that 98.1% of the students with special needs responded that they did find themselves successful and only 1.92% responded that they were not sure. The answers given by their non-disabled peers show that they responded “yes” at 98.66%, “no” at 0.45% and “not sure” at 0.89%. An examination of the answer percentages of both student groups shows that the majority of students with special needs and non-disabled students believed that they were successful. The low percentage ‘no’ and ‘not sure’ responses given by the students in both groups for the same item could have been registered during the adaptation process.

It can be seen that, in response to the expression “I felt relaxed with having two teachers in the classroom”, students with special needs answered “yes” at 98.1% and “not sure” at 1.92%. On the other hand, their non-disabled peers answered “yes” at 98.66% and “not sure” at 0.89% level to the same question. An examination of the answers of the students shows that the high percentages of both groups indicating that a significant majority felt comfortable with two teachers in the classroom. The high level of “yes” answers given by students can be attributed to that the fact that students can potentially obtain help more easily whenever they want and the class can continue in a smooth manner without interruption.

It is observed that 100% of the students answered “yes” to the question regarding the application of co-teaching practices to other classes. These answers reveal that the students are satisfied with co-teaching practices.

A general overview of the answers of both student groups shows that students with special needs and non-disabled students all enjoyed the co-teaching practical education that they experienced for the first time, their perception was that they were successful in the class, they understood more easily and they showed willingness to participate in the class. An evaluation of the research findings implies that students want to have co-teaching practices in other classes and that co-teaching applications are at a satisfactory level from the perspective of students.

**B- Parents’ opinions on co-teaching applications:** The findings of the study in terms of parent’s opinions are presented below.

**B1- Parents’ opinions before and after co-teaching practices:** Parents’ opinions before and after co-teaching practices are presented in [Table 2](#).

**Table-2.** Parents' opinions before and after co-teaching practices

| Opinions before co-teaching practice                                      |    | Opinions after co-teaching practice  |    |
|---|----|--|----|
| Concerns  |    | General evaluation   |    |
| Children cannot internalize when having lectures given by two teachers    | 12 | Practices improve the reading comprehension skills in Turkish language courses | 16 |
| Total   | 12 | Homework assignments and the study handouts are effective and attractive       | 10 |
| Expectations  |    | Total  | 6  |
| The approach being implemented increases the academic success of children | 8  | Recommendations  |    |
| Children like the practices   | 7  | This practice should be implemented in other classes as well                   | 19 |
| Total   | 15 | Total  | 19 |

An examination of the expressions in Table 2 shows that, prior to the co-teaching practices, parents were concerned about the teaching method but had positive expectations. It is seen that, prior to the co-teaching practices, the parents were concerned about their children being unable to internalize lecturing given by two teachers (n: 12). One parent (P4) said the following on this topic: "My son has never received a lecture by two teachers simultaneously. This will be a new experience for all of us." Another parent (P12) said: "I hope this practice in the classroom will be successful as having two teachers can distract the attention of other children just like my child."

On the other hand, it was seen that parents expected that the co-teaching practice would make sure that their children enjoyed higher academic success (n:8) and that their children liked the application (n:7). The opinion of one participant parent (P9) was as follows: "Having lectures given by two teachers can be fun. Both teachers have aspects that are different from each other. I think children can find it interesting." Another parent (P1) said: "I think that the reading comprehension level of my daughter will improve with this practice."

At the end of the 14th week when the co-teaching practice ended, the opinions of parents on the practice were consulted again in an effort to determine their opinions on the application process and the efficiency/effectiveness of the teaching. Accordingly, it was seen that the parents had positive opinions and were satisfied with the practices. It was found out that parents mostly stated that the reading comprehension skills of their children improved (n:16). For example, (P7) said: "I think that it was very efficient. I see that my child has a better understanding of what he reads compared to before." (P14) said: "He is more willing to read texts and the number of correct answers he gives has increased." The fact that parents found the study handouts sent home interesting was among the obtained opinions (n:10). For instance, (P18) said about the homework given: "There was very nice homework. Puzzles, colouring, etc. My son was doing them willingly without getting bored."

Another finding of the research is that all parents requested that the courses with co-teaching practice should be extended further (n:19). (P2) said: "These applications should not only be performed in Turkish courses, but in other classes as well. When I speak to my son at home, he says that being lectured by two teachers is fun."

**Table-3.** Parents' opinions on the effects of co-teaching practices on children's reading skills.

| Effect   | N  |
|--|----|
| Change in reading skills                         | 19 |
| Increase in correct answers                      | 12 |
| Less requests for help                           | 11 |
| Fluent and errorless reading                     | 8  |
| Reading with self-esteem                         | 8  |
| Increase in reading speed                        | 3  |
| Making a connection between texts and daily life | 2  |

**B2- Parents' opinions on the effects of co-teaching practices on children's reading skills:** Parents' opinions on the effects of co-teaching practices on children's reading skills are presented in Table 3.

An examination of the expressions in Table 3 shows that all parents (n:19) think that the classes covered with co-teaching practices increased the reading comprehension skills of their children. (P2) said: "My son's reading comprehension is better now; he can understand and answer questions better." Likewise, according to Table 3 parents stated that their children requested less help when answering reading comprehension questions (n:11) and that they observed an increase in the number of correct answers (n:12). (P7) commented: "Now, he does not want help from me while answering the questions related to the text and he can answer them easily". (P15) said: "When I check the answers of the questions, I can see that he makes fewer mistakes."

Parents stated that the reading of their children also gained fluency (n:8). Their statements are as follows: (P10) "My daughter reads faster and better now." (P18) said: "Her reading is more understandable now." Other findings are that reading speed increased (n:3) and relationships were established between the events in the texts and daily life (n:2). Accordingly, (P17) stated: "He tends to explain the things he learned from the texts he read using some events in his own life. He did not do that previously."

**B3- Parents' opinions on the effects of co-teaching practices on the reading attitudes and willingness of children:** Parents' opinions on the effects of co-teaching practices on the reading attitudes and willingness of children are presented in Table 4.

**Table-4.** Parents' opinions on the effects of co-teaching practices on the reading attitudes and willingness of children.

| Attitude   | N  |
|--|----|
| Increase in reading willingness                  | 15 |
| Increase in willingness to read new texts        | 9  |
| Asking more questions on what they read          | 9  |
| Choosing/showing interest in the books they like | 8  |

As can be seen in Table 4 a considerable majority of parents (n:15) stated that, thanks to the co-teaching practice applied in Turkish language classes, the willingness of their children for reading improved. (P1) said "I observe that he is more willing to read now". On the contrary, some parents expressed that (n:2) the willingness to read and positive attitude towards reading in their child existed before co-teaching practices and some stated that (n:2) that they did not observe any increase in their child's willingness to read. Examples of parent's views with regard to this subject can be given as follows: (P11) "He always had a desire to read." (P19) "He does his homework and reading because he has to. He is not a fan of reading." Parents indicated that after co-teaching practices, their children became more inclined towards books (n:8), and that they read texts that they had just encountered (P9) and ask questions about what they read (n:9). (P2) said: "Now he takes his book and comes to me. When he finishes, he answers the questions without showing signs of boredom."

**B4- Parents' opinions on the effects of co-teaching practices on children's reading comprehension skills:** Parents' opinions on the effects of co-teaching practices on children's reading comprehension skills are presented in Table 5.

**Table-5.** Parents' opinions on the effects of co-teaching practices on children's reading comprehension skills.

| Reading comprehension acquisitions                 | N  |
|--|----|
| Improvement in comprehension skills                | 19 |
| Increase in the number of correct answers          | 9  |
| Solving questions without help                     | 7  |
| Willingness to answer the questions immediately    | 6  |
| Summarizing without errors                         | 5  |
| Establishing causal links                          | 5  |
| Making connection between texts and one's own life | 2  |
| Being able to solve math's problems                | 2  |

Table 5 shows that parents claimed that through co-teaching practices, the reading comprehension skills of their children improved (n:19). Parents stated that the number of correct answers given by their children in response to reading text questions increased (n:9) and that they began to solve the questions without help (n:7). Examples of parent views are provided below: (P2), "He gives more accurate answers to what he reads and he asks less help from us". Parents also stated that their children's skills such as establishing causal linkages (n:5), summarising without mistakes (n:5) and even understanding mathematical problems (n:2) improved. (P19) said: "Now she can even understand mathematical problems better. Before, she used to spend a lot of time trying to understand." (P4) said: "He began to establish causal links between events."

#### **B5- Parents' opinions on the effects of co-teaching practices on children's homework and writing skills:**

Parents' opinions on the effects of co-teaching practices on children's homework and writing skills are presented in Table 6.

**Table-6.** Parents' opinions on the effects of co-teaching practices on children's homework and writing skills.

| <b>Assignment acquisitions</b>                                     | <b>N</b> |
|--|----------|
| Increase in the willingness to do homework and write               | 14       |
| Doing homework without support                                     | 10       |
| Doing homework out of obligation                                   | 7        |
| Getting bored  | 5        |
| Being aware of responsibilities                                    | 4        |
| Spending less time on assignments and giving more accurate answers | 4        |

According to Table 6 a significant majority of parents (n:14) stated that they observed that the willingness of their children for doing homework and writing had increased. (P3) said: "We are not having as much trouble in doing homework and writing." On the other hand, some parents (n:3) claimed that there was no change on their children's ability to do homework, whereas the remaining indicated that they could not decide whether co-teaching practices had an impact on the ability to do homework and writing skills of their children or that they had not observed any change (n:2). (P19) said: "She did not use to like doing homework and writing. To be honest, there is not much change now."

Some parents stated that their children did their homework on their own without any support (n:10) whereas others (n:7) complained that their children did their homework out of obligation and that they became bored while doing homework (n:5). (P19) said: "She was doing her homework and writing assignments because we were insisting. To be honest, not much has changed. She is still getting bored and she wants to finish them quickly." In addition, a number of parents stated that their children were already aware of the importance and had the accepted the responsibility of completing their homework on time (n:4) before the co-teaching practice was implemented. (P2) said: "He is always a mature and responsible child. He does his homework on his own. I think that these practices did not create any change."

**B6- Parents' opinions about the nature of the assignments given to students in the co-teaching applications:** Parents' opinions about the nature of the assignments given to students in the co-teaching applications are provided in Table 7.

**Table-7.** Parents' opinions about the nature of the assignments given to students in the co-teaching applications.

| <b>Nature of assignments</b> | <b>N</b> |
|------------------------------|----------|
| Beneficial                   | 16       |
| Effective                    | 11       |
| Interesting                  | 10       |
| Creativity                   | 6        |
| Endearing reading            | 6        |
| Facilitating learning        | 3        |
| Increasing knowledge         | 3        |

According to [Table 7](#) parents found the assignments given in the co-teaching practices beneficial (n:16), effective (n:11) and interesting (n:10). Their opinions in this topic are provided as follows: (P9) “They were very interesting and enjoyable assignments. He was doing them without getting bored.” At the same time, it has been observed that the parents found assignments creative (n:6), endearing reading (n:6), increasing knowledge (n:3) and facilitating learning (n:3). Accordingly, (P7.) said: “The assignments were creative and not boring. This was motivating him more.”

**B7- Recommendations of parents about the efficiency of co-teaching practices:** Recommendations of parents about the efficiency of co-teaching practices are presented in [Table 8](#).

**Table-8.** Recommendations of parents about the efficiency of co-teaching practices.

| Recommendations   | N  |
|---|----|
| Must be implemented in other classes too                                | 19 |
| Should be prepared for the following classes                            | 9  |
| The assignments that improve creative thinking skills must be increased | 7  |

An examination of the opinions in [Table 8](#) shows that parents were satisfied with co-teaching practices and demanded that they be extended to other classes (n:19). (P4) said: “Not only in Turkish language classes, but I think that you should apply it to other classes as well.” Parents also requested that similar practices are implemented in the following academic year as well (n:9). (P8) said: “I think that doing similar practices in the second grade next year will increase success.” It is also observed that parents believed that the creativity of their children was improved through assignments and that they demanded that the number of such assignments be increased (n:7). (P1) said: “She was comprehending better while doing homework assignments without getting bored. I would prefer that such assignments are also given in other classes.”

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

When the findings of this study were examined, it was found out that the opinions of the students about co-teaching practices were in parallel with the findings of previous studies in the literature ([Verkuyten and Thijs, 2002](#); [Bong and Skaalvik, 2003](#); [Bo et al., 2018](#)). According to this, it was observed that students stated that they felt happy, successful and academically prepared during the co-teaching practices, found the materials used by their teachers interesting, were willing to attend the class and were pleased to be in the school / classroom environment. Since satisfaction at school has an important place in the quality of life of the children, the findings of the study are close to the findings of the study conducted by [Verkuyten and Thijs \(2002\)](#) in the Netherlands. According to the findings obtained by the researchers in this study, the students' school satisfaction levels were found to be high. It was found that the classroom environment was effective in the high school satisfaction of the participating students and the academic and social climate in the classroom had a positive effect on the level of school satisfaction.

In the study, it has been observed that students evaluated the lecturing by two teachers at the same time as efficient and effective and that they requested that similar practices should be applied in other courses. The findings of the study are similar to the literature in this respect. For example, in the screening study conducted by [Wilson and Michaels \(2006\)](#) involving 346 secondary school students (127 special education students, 219 normal development students), the students supported co-teaching and stated that if they were given the opportunity to participate in another co-teaching course, they could get achieve better grades compared to other classes. The students stated that in the classes where co-teaching was carried out, more help was provided to them, multiple teaching approaches were used, different teaching styles and teacher approaches were observed, and thus, their skills were improved. In another study conducted by [Rosati \(2009\)](#) the students displayed that in an inclusive environment where co-teaching was carried out, they understood the value of being able to easily obtain help due to the presence of two teachers at the same time.

Smith (2004) evaluated the students' academic achievements in reading skills in an experimental study in two different elementary schools, which included grades 2, 3 and 4. Smith (2004) compared 2 groups of students' reading skill achievements. One group who was in need of special education was being educated in a co-teaching education environment; whereas the other group who did not have any students with special needs was following the traditional education system. As a result of the experimental research process, no significant difference was observed in the reading achievement scores of the two groups. This result is very important in the context of showing that the academic achievements of students in classes where co-teaching is applied are not adversely affected and their success levels are not lower than students in classes where traditional teaching methods are used. However, the expectation of the study that instructional adaptations would improve the success of the students with normal development was not supported. In this study, it is revealed that in classes given with the co-teaching method, not only students with special needs, but also their peers (and even at higher ratios, see Table 1) have positive opinions about willingness, expectations and self-evaluation as well as academic success. In fact, with emphasis on literature Lersch (2012) and Barron *et al.* (2019) stated that co-teaching may not be sufficiently effective to produce high-level academic results for students, but that it can make various positive contributions (interaction between students with special needs and normally developing students, enjoying the lessons, effective implementation of the curriculum, social, emotional and behavioural growth etc.) which should not go unnoticed.

When the findings of the research in the dimension of parents' views are evaluated, it is revealed that the participant parents had some concerns before the co-teaching practices, but after the applications started, they felt more comfortable as a result of the diversity of the materials used and their children's academic progress. Parents stated that their children's reading comprehension skills increased, the number of correct answers given to the questions about their texts increased, their children increased their willingness to read, and their homework and writing skills were positively affected. From this respect, the findings are similar to the findings of previous studies (Tichenor *et al.*, 2000; Cooper *et al.*, 2001; Spence, 2005).

Tichenor *et al.* (2000) conducted a study to identify the opinions of 12 special education students and their parents, their 30 normal development classmates and their parents, with a total of 42 participant families, in regards to the impact of co-teaching practices on the development and achievement of the children. Data were obtained based on the answers which the parents gave to a total of 10 questions in the semi-structured interview form. Accordingly, parents reported that they were highly satisfied with the co-teaching practices implemented in their children's classrooms and that they had a positive attitude towards co-teaching practices and that their children's self-esteem, social skills and academic achievement had increased. In addition, a significant number of parents pointed out that co-teaching practices were unique, and they underlined that this practice offered various opportunities for learning; and furthermore, that co-teaching was of great benefit to their children.

Parents who participated in this study evaluated the homework assignments given as useful, effective, efficient, encouraging and informative. The findings of the study are similar to those of Cooper *et al.* (2001) who carried out their research with the participation of 428 students and parents and 28 teachers working in 2nd and 4th grades to determine the impact of homework assignments on the performance of elementary school students. In this study, parents' opinions on student assignments were also consulted. Accordingly, the participant parents evaluated the student assignments as non-distracting and success-increasing. One remarkable finding in the study was that, although parents liked the assignments presented, they stated that their children did not change their habits with regard to doing homework. This situation can be expressed as a limitation of the research. The reason for this result may be due to the fact that assignments are given in other classes as well and the parents tend to make a general comment considering these assignments. Furthermore, considering that the application period was 3 months, it does not seem to be a fair expectation that the students would completely change their homework habits.

Another finding of the study was that the parents suggested that the courses carried out through co-teaching practices should be implemented in other classes as well. It was observed that apart from language education, co-

teaching showed effective results in lessons such as mathematics and science and at different grades from pre-school to high school (Spence, 2005; Rosati, 2009; Lersch, 2012). Thus, it can be surmised that co-teaching can be applied in different levels and for various lessons, as was emphasized by parents in this research. According to Scruggs and Mastropieri (2017) co-teaching, which is considered as an educational reform, should be legalized.

At the core of co-teaching practices are collaborative teachers and students with special needs. However, the findings of this study showed that the success of co-teaching is related to obtaining the same level of efficiency in children with normal development in the same classroom. Similarly, it is thought that families can support the teaching process and thus increase the efficiency of co-teaching. It can be said that parents can establish more effective cooperation with teachers in order to eliminate the possible learning problems they may observe in their children by means of co-teaching. On the other hand, in the event that parents and the students with normal development be excluded from the co-teaching process may adversely affect the quality of the planned teaching.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the findings of the research, it was seen that co-teaching practices in all inclusive environments had positive effects on the development of students' comprehension skills and that these practices responded to the students' academic and social needs. One of the most noteworthy of these effects on the students is that they enjoyed increased self-confidence in their reading skills and developed a positive attitude towards co-teaching. The most striking result in the parents' perspective was that the co-teaching practices contributed to the academic achievement of their children and thus the parents demanded that they be adapted to other courses. It is important that families understand their own responsibilities in the learning process of children with special needs, and this can be facilitated by co-teaching. It can also be ensured that families have more realistic expectations about the education of their children. By collaborating with the family, teachers can perform their tasks more effectively and meet the learning needs of their students.

Based on the findings of this study, which presents an examination of parent and student views on co-teaching practices which have to be disseminated throughout Cyprus, it is considered appropriate to make the following recommendations.

1. Co-teaching practices on the basis of inclusive education in Northern Cyprus are very new, unlike the practices around the world. In this context, the findings of this study suggesting that new practices can be adopted by parents are important. Similarly, it is believed that new approaches in inclusive environments should be attempted in developing countries like North Cyprus and sharing the results will contribute to the literature review in terms of its negative and positive aspects.

2. When the opinions of the students are evaluated, it is seen that satisfaction has been achieved in all dimensions. Considering the fact that students did not have any prior experience of being lectured by two teachers and that their opinions changed in very short periods of time, it can be claimed that dissemination of this example to the entire country will make a contribution to the academic development of students and will increase their interest in the classes.

3. It can be ensured that new applications be implemented in schools around different settlements in Cyprus, in which co-teaching practices are tested with the execution of different models in courses other than Turkish language. The results which will be obtained from various dimensions such as parents, teachers, peers and school administrators may lead co-teaching practices to become widespread. This can therefore make a contribution to improving the stakeholders level of awareness with regard to co-teaching.

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Annex-1. Co-teaching application plan.

| Program items      | Weeks (1-4)   | Weeks (5-8)  | Weeks (9-12)   | Weeks (13-14)                               |
|--------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Texts              | Cleaning Task<br>Playing Cards<br>Sibling Love<br>End of Loneliness   | Messy Room<br>End of Lie<br>Ismail's Disease<br>Dirty Hands  | Broken Phone<br>Ball Running to Street<br>Soup without Bread<br>Cleanliness of Boncuk  | Broken Tree<br>Branches<br>Bicycle Accident |
|                    | Before reading  | During reading   | After reading  |   |
| Reading Strategies | Imagination in mind<br>Skimming over-using prior knowledge<br>Making guesses<br>Creating Expectations<br>Making use of Videos-Visuals<br>Making Connections<br>Dramatization<br>Brainstorming | Imagination in mind<br>Making a Model<br>Guided Application<br>Independent Application<br>Chorus Reading<br>Fluent Reading<br>Word Identification<br>Affective Image Formation | Preparing Visual Word Cards<br>Question-Answer<br>Summarising<br>Story Wheel<br>Answering the Story Questions<br>Watching Video<br>Story Sorting<br>Dramatization<br>Story Map,<br>Mental Image Formation<br>Making Connection |   |
| Assessment         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permanent Product Assessment (Assessment of Working Leaflets)</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Evaluation Questions for the Text</li> </ul>        |  |  |   |
| Teachers in charge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom Teacher</li> <li>• Special Education Teacher</li> </ul>  |  |  |   |

Source: This plan is prepared by the researchers of this study.

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