Properties of Social Games and Social Interactions of a Special Needed Child in Inclusive Preschool Education

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Summary

Purpose

Special needed children have different cognitive, social, and emotional characteristics comparing to their typical developing peers. Inclusive education is one of the methods of special education. The number of special needed children attending to inclusive education has been increased in recent years (MEB, 2010). Inclusive education in early childhood education is having a special needed child in a regular preschool setting with necessary support given by special education experts. This model is important because a-typical developing children are not isolated in the program and it is expected that typical developing children would be good role models for them. The main intention of the program is helping these children to comply with the society, helping them to increase basic interaction skills, and improving their development. Social games and social interaction skills are the two significant components to observe children’s development. It is considered that determining special needed children’s properties of social games and social interactions would help educators to increase the quality of the program.

Method

The purpose of the study was to analyze a special needed child’s properties of social games and social interaction in inclusive preschool education program. One of the qualitative study approaches -case study- was chosen to determine the properties. Purposive sampling method was used to establish the participant. Participants’ continuity to the preschool and technical foundation of the preschools was taken into consideration to be able to collect data. A special needed child with cognitive delay was chosen in Konya city. Social game properties were set as group play, isolated play and parallel play defined by Rubin (1989). Kihlstrom (2010) and Knox (1997) identified social interaction skills. Based on their study, five social interaction components and their indicators were determined: Direction (adult, peer), form (begin, respond), attitude (positive, negative), and quality (repetition, progress). Non play behaviors were coded as neutral. Using these properties, an observation form created for coding purposes. Child’s free play episodes were tape recorded and analyzed using five minutes time intervals by two independent observers. Total of 1200 minutes were analyzed and the inter observer reliability was 90%.

Results and Conclusions

Results revealed that a child with cognitive delay plays less group play (521) comparing to her peers. Considerately intensive parallel play had been observed (50%). Even though her isolated play rate (17%) came after the group and parallel play, it was also high considering her age level. Results related to social play properties indicated that she often interacts with adults (44%). Her interactions often developed as a respond (49%) to interaction attempts. Even though her emotional status were mostly positive (59%) in interactions, she

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was not engaged in any interactions 33% of the time. Her interactions showed some development (40%) yet, she also had a high level of repetition (27%). These results and disadvantages are typical for a special needed children however it has been found that the components of social interaction and group play can be used to improve her social abilities.