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## Teacher candidates' opinions about student resistance

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### Abstract

One of the factors that affect teaching-learning process is student resistance behaviors. Student resistance is generally described as negative, rebelling and inappropriate behaviors. In order to provide effective learning and also to relieve given efforts, it is necessary to eliminate student resistance behaviors. Depending on this necessity, in order to determine students' resistance behaviors semi-structured interviews were carried out with 9 Primary School Education Program students taking 'Teaching Practice' course in 2008-2009 Spring Term. According to descriptive analysis of results, it was found out that the most common student resistance behaviors' are avoiding from joining lessons, not paying attention in lessons, ignoring the teacher and labeling his/her friends.

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### 1. Introduction

Student resistance behaviors are one of the factors that affect components of teaching-learning process negatively. Student resistance concept started to find a place in foreign literature during the second half of 1980s especially with empirical studies, which attempted to find out the reasons of students' resistance and also to provide ways for eliminating these reasons. By Giroux (2001), who has important studies about this topic, student resistance is defined as student's opposing behaviors to teaching activities. Some studies pointed out that these behaviors which are defined as negative, destructive, rebellious and inadaptible, may also have positive effects actually (Burroughs, Kearney and Plax, 1989, Lindquist, 1994). For example, students' complaints about troublesome events in teaching-learning process or their opposition to the teaching activities and ideas which are inappropriate; may bring forth the development of learning environments and teaching activities in a positive way (Burroughs, Kearney & Plax, 1989). Kearney and Plax (1992) and Field and Olafsen (1999) stated that, most of the teachers evaluate the students' resistance behaviors in a negative way.

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Field and Olafsen (1999) made interviews with 7<sup>th</sup> grade students, their parents and teachers to find out how and in which situations student resistance behaviors can be observed, how these behaviors develop, whether they have different types or not and how they are perceived by teachers and parents. One of the findings of this research has shown that, most of the time, teachers perceive resistance behaviors as destructive, focused on taking attention, refusing cooperation and impulsive ones. On the other hand, Lindquist (1994) stated that, if students' resistance behavior is not against teachers' political views and social values, teachers don't tend to have a negative attitude towards them and they even support students' resistance behaviors.

Emphasizing the need for differentiation between the students who are unwilling and resistant, Whiteneck (2005) stated that, unwilling and resistant students differ in their motivation level and expectations from teachers. Similarly, also in literature, student resistance and unwanted student behavior concepts may be confused with each other. Student resistance includes behaviors that are reinforced by contradictions which exist between student's daily life and school life, come up in a long term in a planned way and whose results may be more destructive than unwanted student behaviors. On the other hand, unwanted student behaviors are the ones that are performed abruptly by one or several students in order to take attention or to interrupt the lesson and which are easier to overcome than resistance behaviors (Alpert, 1991).

Miles (2007) illustrated that resistant students' behaviors as refusing to show expected attitudes in classroom routines, complaining because they are misunderstood or aren't appreciated, being in a mood of argument, sulking, criticizing the authority and showing no respect to it, showing sensitive attitudes to the people who surrounds him/her, tend to both oral and physical challenges, having negative approach and being pessimistic. Addition to these, act passively, mentally withdrawing in learning-teaching process, opposing to the activities in learning environment and not attending to the classes are also seen as resistance behaviors (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2009).

Burroughs, Kearney and Plax (1989), who have important contribution to the student resistance subject area, have worked with 574 undergraduate students to find out the techniques of student resistance. It was demanded from students to read scenarios which demonstrate 4 different learning environments in which there were teachers who showed prosocial-immediate, prosocial-nonimmediate, antisocial-immediate and antisocial-nonimmediate behaviors to students and to write how they would behave in those learning environments. According to analysis of attained data, 2916 behavior which students stated they would show classified in 19 titles. According to the findings of the research, resistance behaviors which undergraduate students show are as in below:

Table 1. Undergraduate students' resistance behaviors

1. Teacher advice	2. Teacher blame	3. Avoidance	4. Reluctant compliance
5. Active resistance	6. Deception	7. Direct communication	8. Disruption
9. Excuses	10. Ignoring the teacher	11. Priorities	12. Challenge the teacher's basis of power
13. Rally student support	14. Appeal to powerful others	15. Modeling teacher behavior	16. Modeling teacher affect
17. Hostile defensive	18. Student rebuttal	19. Revenge	

Brookfield (2006), states that students who show resistance need help in order to learn and lists the reasons of students' resistance as poor self-esteem, fear, disjunction of learning and teaching styles, irrelevance of the learning activity, culture, poor instructions from teacher and student's dislike of teacher. Along with this, Alpert (1991) noted that, students resistance is likely to appear in learning environments where academic subject matter knowledge is emphasized directly by the teacher and classroom communication is only available with the repetition of these knowledge. Besides, it is also stated that, individuals who created several beliefs and mental models according to the nature of teaching -learning and activities of them in their previous educational backgrounds, sometimes prefer not to learn new knowledge but to resist when they are in situations that are not similar to these beliefs and models (Virginia Commonwealth University, 2009). However, stating that students' resistance behaviors may have variety of resources, Goodman (2007) supported that most of these behaviors are generally depend on societal and psychological bases. Field and Olafsen (1999) stated that resistant students' usually are not emotionally disturbed, behaviourally disordered, learning disabled or economically disadvantaged but they just have some basic needs which are belonging, power, freedom and amusement feelings (Miles, 2007).

Eliminating the behaviors which hinder learning is really important in order not to waste given efforts to eventuate effective learning. Goodman (2007) stated that, in order to overcome resistance behaviors in the classroom it is needed to find out the reasons that lead to these behaviors firstly and called attention to overdose of support to students in this process would fend them off, also giving more than needed responsibility would lead to students' closing him/herself fully. Determining the reasons of students' resistant behaviors' basis and preventing students from showing such behaviors not only would effect both him/herself and his/her friends learning positively, but also give chance to teachers to become more enthusiastic about their instruction without experiencing any obstacle in teaching-learning process. Since student resistance is a very new concept in education literature, in Turkey there are very limited number of researches about it. Moreover, when the researches which focus on student resistance are taken into account, in nearly all of them it is aimed to find out university students' resistance behaviors and their resources. For instance, Yuksel (2003) developed a scale with 67 items to determine undergraduate students' resistance behaviors and their resources and also investigated whether they have any relation with gender, department and instruction type (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> instruction) variables. However, there is not a study which focuses on primary school students' resistance behaviors. Because of this, there is a need for determining kinds of primary school students' resistance behaviors and resources of these behaviors. Depending on this need in this research, it was mainly aimed to find out primary school students' resistance behaviors and their resources depending on opinions of Primary School Education Program students, and in accordance with this aim answers were searched with these questions :

1. What kind of student resistance behaviors did you encounter in classrooms which you observe?
2. What can be the resource of students' resistance behaviors?
3. In which lessons students show more resistance behaviors?
4. In what kind of activities which are planned during teaching-learning process (teacher centered and student centered activities), students show resistance behaviors?
5. What are the effects of student resistance behaviors in the classroom?
6. Do the resistance behaviors' frequency show any difference among classroom levels?
7. What do the teachers who you observe do to overcome students' resistance behaviors?
8. What would you suggest to prevent students' resistance behaviors?

Research is limited with the opinions of the students, who were in 4<sup>th</sup> class of Primary School Education Program and took 'Teaching Practice' course in 2008-2009 Spring Term and also the ones who accepted to take part in the research voluntarily. It is hoped that, research findings would provide information about students' resistance behaviors and reasons of them and also practices that can eliminate these resistance behaviors and compose a resource for new studies.

## **2. Method**

The research was designed as a case study which is one of the qualitative research method intending to study the current fact in its own real life framework and displays a reflection of an abstract principle or an idea in real life (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Robson, 2002; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005).

### *2.1. Process of Data Collection*

Findings of the research were collected through semi-structured interviews made in accordance with questions prepared beforehand, which differs from structured interviews in researchers' affecting the process by adding explanations in the interview process or adding and abstracting something from interview questions (Fontana & Prokos, 2007; Robson, 2002; Wengraf, 2006). Before the interviews, a draft which includes the importance and aims

of the research and also open-ended questions which would be directed to students was presented to experts. After expert revision, the final version of the instrument was prepared. Interviews were made on the date and time which was arranged by the researcher and students together (from 25.05.2009 to 30.06.2009) and student answers which made up research data were recorded with the permission of the students.

## 2.2. Data Analysis Process

In analysis of data, descriptive analysis was made by using Packet Program NVivo8.0. In this process, first of all data was turned in to a written form and in order to find out data's reliability, 20% of the data presented to an expert. After this step, three researchers made encoding independently under the light of research questions. Then, after creating main and sub themes according to data two researchers come together and discussed the findings by making a cause-effect relation. Negotiating after their individual analysis, researchers used Agreement/(Agreement+Disagreement)\*100 formula in order to calculate agreement rate and 85.7% agreement rate was achieved. Creating an encoding key with the main and sub themes which they agreed, researchers presented this key to the third researcher. Comparing his/her own data analysis results with encoding key's results, the third researcher also agreed with the other two researchers. By using the same formula, the three researchers agreed on 80.0% rate. This rate accepted as reliable for the research (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Finally, researchers ordered all data and encodings according to the main and sub themes on which they agreed, then calculated frequencies.

## 3. Results (Findings)

Findings, taken from semi-structured interviews with Primary School Education Program 4<sup>th</sup> class students, were presented in tables which show their frequencies with their main and sub-themes in accordance with the sequence of questions directed to student-teachers. According to student-teachers' views, student resistance behaviors which were observed in classrooms are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Student resistance behaviors

Themes	N
Avoiding from joining lessons	5
Not paying attention in lessons	4
Ignoring the teacher	3
Labeling other students	2
Arguing with the teacher	1
Making up excuses	1
Interrupting the lesson	1
Closing him/herself to stimulators	1

As it is seen from Table 2, the themes about resistance behaviors which student-teachers came across in observation classes are: avoiding from joining lessons, not paying attention in lessons, ignoring the teacher, labeling other students, arguing with the teacher, making up excuses, interrupting the lesson and closing him/herself to stimulators. Among the stated resistance behaviors, the most common one is 'avoiding from joining lessons' and this behavior is followed by 'not paying attention in lessons'. The answers student-teachers gave to the research question in order to determine students' resistance behaviors are like these: [O2- 'Most of the time, we encounter behaviors which show student's unwillingness against the process of the lesson. For instance: I don't want to do this, ... Why do we do this?, ... It's not necessary, I don't want to do this, Do I have to do this?,...etc.'], [O5-'We talked to our mentor teacher, there was a student he/she wasn't dealing with the lesson. Also, she/he said nothing. She/he didn't do her/his homework regularly...']

Findings taken from student-teachers' opinions about the sources of resistance behaviors are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Sources of resistance behaviors

Themes	N
Family-based	

Cossetting	5
Divorced parents	4
Lack of attention	4
Socio-cultural and economic structure	2
Domestic violence	2
Incoherence between parents	1
Teacher-based	
Negative attitude of the teacher	5
Professional deficiency of the teacher	2
Others	
Negative attitude of friends	3
Student's lack of self-confidence	1

As it is clear from Table 3, student-teachers stated that, there are a number of family-based sources in the origin of resistance behaviors such as; cossetting, divorced parents' children's problems, lack of attention, family's socio-cultural and economic structure, domestic violence and parents' incoherent attitudes towards children. Quotations from student-teachers' who noted that family is in the core of resistance behaviors, statements are like this: [O8- 'Families are also contributory but they don't let the children free enough they just coddle a lot.'], [O9- 'Because, families affect children a lot. The child who I said had divorced parents became naughty probably because he didn't have a father and when he saw a parent of others' he became like this.']

Another standing out view of student-teachers about resistance behaviors' sources are, teacher's negative attitude towards student and teacher's inefficiency in his/her profession. In fact, a student-teacher stated this: [O4- '...moreover, I also lean this on the attitude of the teacher towards student. Teacher was a little bit rude. Students may be behaving like this because of the teacher's repressive statements...']

Finally, some of the student-teachers who attended this research said that, other students' negative attitudes and resistant student's lack of self-confidence may be causes of resistant behaviors. The statement of a student-teacher, who noted that resistance behaviors can be caused by the other students, is like this: [O8- '...Friends are also effective. Because, when the others show the same behaviors, resistant student show them more again.']

The findings of the questions which were directed to student-teachers in order to determine in which lessons students show resistance behaviors are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Lessons in which students show resistance

Themes	N
Lessons in which they fail	5
Lessons in which they are successful	2
All the lessons	1
Activity-centered lessons	1

As it is seen in Table 4, students show the highest rate of resistance behaviors in lessons which they fail. Examples from student-teachers' views are like these: [O2- 'A student doesn't want to take the course if he/she can't be successful in it. For example; a student who failed in mathematics lesson, doesn't want to answer the questions, doesn't want to do ...'], [O4- 'In which lessons...in fact, for example; in mathematics lessons or lessons which they cannot do, students are more disinterested and show excessive amount of resistance.

The findings which were taken from student-teachers' ideas about the activities to which students show resistance behavior, are as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Activities to which students show resistance

Themes	N
Teacher-centered	6
Student-centered	2
Both teacher and student-centered	1

As it is stated in Table 5, students show resistance behaviors mostly in teacher-centered activities. The examples from student-teacher's ideas who support this view are like these: [O1- 'I think, teacher centered. Because, in student centered, students are actively included in the process such as in drama or educational based games, they

enjoy themselves. They even don't notice how the time passes but in teacher centered lessons, there are some interruptions, I mean resistance.'], [O7- 'In student centered lessons, students can speak in some way or the other, good or bad... However, it exactly stays where it has been in teacher centered lessons. He/she can be left outside or not taken into consideration by the teacher.']

In Table 6, there are findings related to student-teachers' views about the effects of resistance behaviors in the classroom.

Table 6. Effects of resistance behaviors in classroom

Themes	N
Interrupting the students	5
Undermining the teacher's motivation	4
Interrupting the teaching-learning process	4
Creating an inappropriate model for students	3
Marginalizing the student	1

As it is clear from Table 6, resistance behaviors have negative effects such as; interrupting the students, undermining the motivation of the teacher, interrupting the teaching-learning process, creating an inappropriate model for students and marginalizing the student. Examples from statements of student-teachers related to resistance behaviors' effects in classroom are like this: [O6- 'Of course it has an effect on a student...he/she also disturbs his/her friends at the same time. He/she distracts his/her friends' attention.'], [O2- 'After undermining the teachers' motivation, teacher starts to try new ways. If he/she has to do that lesson, this time can pass quickly.'], [O7- 'It is clear that it wastes a lot of time. Because, class are of between 20 and 30 students and the chance of dealing with students individually also declines. ...If there are 15 math questions, that number declines to 7 or 8...']

In Table 7, findings which were taken from student-teachers' views in order to determine the relation between resistance behaviors and classroom levels.

Table 7. Relation between classroom levels and resistance behaviors

Themes	N
It declines while the classroom level inclines	4
It inclines simultaneously with classroom level	3
It doesn't change	2

As it is stated in Table 7, while some of the student-teachers supported the idea that resistance behaviors descend as classroom levels ascend, the others supported vice versa. Examples from student-teachers are as in the following statements: [O8- 'Little students have just left their homes, they can make their mothers whatever they want so they may think this situation would be the same for their teachers, therefore, there can be much more resistance behaviors in little students' classes.], [ O2- 'The higher the level of the classroom, the more resistance behavior. It is hard for teacher to lead the class.']

In Table 8, there are findings based on student-teachers' observed teacher behaviors in order to prevent resistance behaviors and their own opinions and suggestions about this topic.

Table 8. Teacher behaviors in order to prevent resistance behaviors and suggestions

Themes	N
Oral warnings	5
Being indifferent	4
Communicating with family	3
Communicating with student	2
Directing to guidance facilities	1
Ignorance	1
Punishing	1
Motivating	1

As it is clear in Table 8, student-teachers stated that the teachers they observed may sometimes stay ignorant to the resistance behaviors while most of the time they use oral warnings. Examples from the statements of student-

teachers, who support these opinions, are as in the following: [O9- ‘...Our teacher, was trying to be tender - honey don’t do that, ok sweetheart don’t, like this, let’s talk about this later- while she was warning at the same time.’], [O3- ‘Of course, every teacher uses different techniques but our teacher said – I believe, I’m trying to do my best. I’m dealing with this child 1-2 years.- Now, the teacher is trying to go on the lesson.’]

The findings which were taken from student-teachers’ ideas about suggestions in order to prevent resistance behaviors, are as shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Student-teacher’s suggestions in order to prevent resistance behaviors

Themes	N
Communicating with the student effectively	4
Considering individual differences	4
Award and prompter usage	3
Directing to guidance facilities	3
Making student-centered activities	3
Giving responsibility to the student	2
Making student develop empathy	1
Getting in touch with family	1
Ignorance	1
Motivating the student	1

As it is stated in Table 9, when it is asked to the student-teachers what they are planning to do in order to prevent resistance behaviors in their own classes, it was seen that they stressed communicating with the student, considering the individual differences of the students, using awards and prompters, directing the student to guidance facilities and making student-centered activities during teaching-learning process. The student-teachers who stated these opinions, stated their ideas in these ways: [O7- ‘...For me, talking to the student is the first step, we can talk with them.’], [O4- ‘First of all knowing all the students one by one, considering individual differences and choosing a way of declining the amount of these behaviors according to them. Maybe, we can not terminate them but we can cut them down to minimum levels.’], [O2- ‘As I said before, prompter cards ... making the student realize that people around him/her can see his/her success, this made him/her join the lessons.’], [O5- ‘We really should get help from Guidance Facilities. Because, classroom management is really hard. You should live what you read in books. Maybe, you can not overcome it even if you live it.’], [O6- ‘... Particularly we need to make our lessons student-centered. As in the other way, students get bored a lot.’]

#### 4. Discussion

In this research, in which the aim was to determine resistance behaviors that students display and their sources, among the resistance behaviors which students show there are: avoiding from joining lessons, not paying attention in lessons, ignoring the teacher, labeling other students, arguing with the teacher, making up excuses, interrupting the lesson and closing him/herself to stimulators. Findings taken from this research also show some similarities with the findings of researches which Yüksel (2003), Miles (2007) and Burroughs, Kearney and Plax (1989) have conducted on university students. Opposing to activities in learning environment, closing him/herself mentally in teaching-learning process, ignoring the teacher, avoiding liability of lessons and making up excuses are among the findings which are similar in all these researches. Overlapping of primary school and university students’ resistance behaviors that they display can be interpreted as students have similar features from their childhood or resistance behaviors do not change that much according to teaching levels. Along with this, emerging of resistance behaviors in such younger classes bring forth the need of taking precautions in order to determine and eliminate these behaviors. Because, the earlier we determine these behaviors, the further we can be away from the problems in the following stages of education.

Student-teachers stated that apart from a number of family-based problems such as: cossetting, problems which divorced parents’ children face with, lack of concern, family’s socio-cultural and economic structure, domestic violence and irrelevance in the behaviors in parents’ behaviors towards child; teacher’s negative attitude towards student, teacher’s inefficiency in profession, other students attitudes and resistant student’s lack of self-confidence can also be a cause of resistance behaviors. As some researchers noted (Goodman,2007; Field and Olafsen, 1999),

the findings which are similar to resistance behaviors' causes are signs that show student's near environment (family, teacher, friend) and affective features have important effect on resistances.

Student-teachers stated that resistance behaviors are mostly observed in lessons which students fail and activities which are teacher-centered. These findings can be considered as a consequences of students' low self-confidence and failure anxiety about lessons. In addition, they consistent with Brookfield's (2006) and Alpert's (1991) statements on reasons of resistance behaviors.

As mentioned before, resistance behaviors are mostly discussed with their undesirable results. Likewise, in this research, student-teachers stated just negative effects of resistance behaviors in class such as: interrupting the students, undermining the motivation of the teacher, interrupting the teaching-learning process, creating an inappropriate model for students and marginalizing the student. These findings are consistent with Kearney and Plax's (1992) and Field and Olafsen's (1999) statements. In their studies they also mentioned that most of the teachers perceive students' resistance behaviors as destructive, focused on taking attention, refusing cooperation and impulsive ones. This finding can be considered as a sign of confusion of both teachers and student-teachers about student resistance and unwanted student behavior concepts.

When we look at the resistance behaviors emerging in classes, their sources and their effects in the classroom (interrupting the students, declining the teacher's motivation, interrupting the teaching-learning process, creating a bad model for students and alienation of resistant student), it is clear that it may have an effect on all features of teaching-learning process. However, in the process of elimination of these behaviors, most of the job is on the teacher who is both one of the factors for emerging of these behaviors and also who is affected by these behaviors negatively. Herein, there is a need for informing the teachers about resistance behaviors. In this teacher training programs, dealing with resistance behaviors which are confused with unwanted student behaviors most of the time and informing the student-teachers are really necessary. Because, teacher needs to know these behaviors in order to prevent them. In other words, we should develop awareness in teachers.

As a matter of fact, one of the findings is like that; some of the teachers ignore these behaviors or show strict attitudes over them. However, both of these attitudes may lead to settlement of these behaviors in students other than eliminating them. Along with the teachers' becoming conscious, teachers will be able to be more effective in issues such as: what he/she needs to be careful about (student-centered lesson, making the student active in the classroom, using different teaching methods-techniques, etc.), how she/he can support the student in this situation (motivating the student, taking precautions in order to take attention of the student, dealing with his/her anxieties, leading him/her to guidance facilities, etc.) and how he/he can lead families (informing families and making warnings, etc.). As a conclusion, the earlier we take precautions in order to eliminate resistance behaviors, the easier we can control the negations of these behaviors which effect all the components in teaching-learning process and the easier we can make them positive.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendation**

In this research, which the aim was to determine resistance behaviors that students display and their sources, it has been determined that primary school students show resistance behaviors parallel to the ones which are specified in province (not attending to lesson, not dealing with the lesson, ignoring the teacher, etc.) and it has found out that, on the base of these behaviors there are factors about teacher, family and sometimes their friends and also themselves.

In effective learning process, students are expected to take their own learning responsibility and be an active participant of teaching-learning process. On the other hand, showing resistance behaviors in class mostly results in failure of teaching-learning process. Therefore, determining resistance behaviors and their sources would make easier to cope with these behaviors' undesirable results. As a result, teachers should be informed about resistance behaviors and the ways to cope with them both in their university education and professional lives.

Apart from this research about a new concept in learning process 'student resistance' which has been conducted with qualitative method, more research may be conducted by using quantitative research methods (depending on a scale or survey). At the same time, as views of students from different formal education stages can be taken through qualitative and quantitative research methods, it will also be appropriate to apply to opinions of teachers and families. Besides, apart from such parameters as genders of the students, their academic success, educational stages;



we can make comparisons about resistance behaviors by taking into consideration such parameters, which are among the important features about their learning, as; their learning styles, thinking and learning strategies they use.

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