

From the Editor...

Dear Readers,

We are with you again with the Ankara University Faculty of Educational Sciences Journal of Special Education's last issue, September 2021, Volume 22, Issue 3. As always has been, I would like to thank here those who contributed as our authors, reviewers, readers, our Academic Advisory Board, and our Editorial Board. I would like to indicate that as the Editorial Board, we put forth the effort to move our journal to a higher level both quantitatively and qualitatively in the forthcoming process...

Before I begin to introduce the articles in this issue, I would like to inform you about important developments regarding our journal. We decided that it would be more appropriate for our new colleagues to join our Editorial Board in order to ensure that our journal is published on time, to prevent our writers from suffering time-consuming grievances and to speed up the editorial reading process. I would like to welcome and wish success in their work to our new "Assistant Editors" for the designation of "Writing and Language Editor" *Assist. Prof. Hatice AKÇAKAYA* from Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University who has been previously working with us as a Technical Executive, for the designation of "Measurement and Evaluation Editor" *Assist. Prof. Asiye Şengül AVŞAR* from Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University, *Res. Assist. Levent ERTUNA, Ph.D.*, from Sakarya University and *Res. Assist. İbrahim UYSAL, Ph.D.* from Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University, as well as to our new "Technical Executives" *Res. Assist. Duygu MÜLKÜT* from Sakarya University, *Res. Assist. Esra GENÇ* from Anadolu University, *Res. Assist. Merve ÖZDEMİR KILIÇ* and *Res. Assist. Hatice Cansu BİLGİÇ* from Gazi University, and *Res. Assist. Nagihan BAŞ* from Ordu University. In this process, I would like to thank them in advance for their contribution and devoted work to increase the quantity and quality of the articles published in our journal. In addition, I would like to thank *Lecturer Özge ALTINTAŞ, Ph.D.* and *Res. Assist. Fatma KIZILTOPRAK, Ph.D.*, former Measurement and Evaluation Editors, as well as to *Res. Assist. Uğur YASSIBAŞ, Ph.D.*, former Technical Executive, who left our team as of this issue, for their contribution to our journal and their devoted work I would like to wish them success in their future works.

This issue of our journal contains eight research and two review articles. I want to briefly share these studies with you. The first research article in the current issue includes a study of *Hale ÇOTUK* and *Selda ÖZDEMİR* namely "A Comparison of the Reactions to Emotional Expressions of Children With Visual Impairments and Sighted Children." In this study, children's reactions to happy and sad emotional expressions were examined during play time. The study sample was 20 children with visual impairments (10 children with severe visual impairments, 10 children with low vision) and 20 sighted children who were between the age of 4 and 6 years. Happy and sad emotional states were reflected by peer partners during play interactions. Children with visual impairments and sighted children's reactions to peer's emotional states were observed. Coding scheme included seven categories; ignorance, physical comforting, positive response, distraction, directing attention without reacting, negative response, and physical excitement response. Findings of the study showed that there was a difference between the emotional expression reactions of children with visual impairments and sighted children. Results indicated that children with visual impairments displayed more ignorance behaviors than sighted children. The findings of the study were discussed and suggestions for future studies were provided.

The second study namely "*An Exploration of Special Education Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development*" was conducted by *Faris ALGAHTANI*. This interpretive qualitative study explored professional development needs and practices for supporting and promoting the development of special education teachers in Saudi Arabia. Nine teachers were interviewed. The study used the interpretive approach. Semi-structured interviews were carried out. Thematic analysis was used in data analysis. The majority of the participants expressed their frustration with workloads especially including administrative tasks. They clearly articulated their needs for professional development in areas specific to special education, notably more effective management of the whole process involving Individualized Educational Plans. In particular, they sought ways of improving the instruction and student attainment based on classroom situations. They wished to have access to mentoring and online resources so that their needs were met. This would require a sufficient number of experienced and knowledgeable teachers to act as mentors, a need which could potentially be met through access to one or more digital platforms.

The third research article in this issue is authored by *Özlem DOĞAN-TEMUR* and *Nurdan KORKMAZ* namely "*Parent Experiences of Children With Special Learning Difficulties About Mathematics Learning Process: A Case Study.*" The aim of this study was to examine the experiences of parents of students with special learning difficulties about the mathematics education. The design of the study was case study. A semi-structured interview form was developed. The criterion-sampling model was adopted. The sample consisted of the parents of 1st-4th grade students with mild learning difficulties. Content analysis was utilized. It was concluded that the participants found themselves inadequate in many areas, their self-confidence was built following special education, their attitudes towards mathematics became positive, they observed progress related to the processing skills of their children and supported their children in terms of memory skills and retrieval. It was seen that some parents found

themselves as insufficient in terms of their communication with children. Most of the parents did not have enough roles in the learning process.

The fourth article which was conducted by *Seda KARAKAŞOĞLU* and *Selda ÖZDEMİR* namely “*A Comparative Examination of Theory of Mind and Developmental Play Assessment in Children With Visual Impairments and Sighted Children.*” This study examined the relationship between developmental play levels and theory of mind in children with visual impairments and sighted children during the preschool period. The study groups consisted of 30 children with visual impairments aged between 48-72 months and 30 age-matched sighted children. Participants in both groups were also matched to each other based on their cognitive and language levels. The design of the study was the comparative correlational design. The children’s play levels were examined through the use of Developmental Play Assessment Tool developed by Lifter (2000) and First-Order False Belief Understanding tasks. Study results showed that there were significant differences between the developmental play levels of children with visual impairments and sighted children. In addition, there was a significant relationship between children’s first-order false-belief scores and developmental play assessment scores in all study groups. Findings from the study are important in understanding the development of vision, play, and theory of mind. Research findings were discussed and suggestions for future research were provided.

The fifth research article namely “*Determining the Cognitive and Metacognitive Strategies Used by Students With Learning Disabilities and Low- and Average-Achieving During Mathematical Problem Solving*” was authored by *Ufuk ÖZKUBAT* and *Emine Rüya ÖZMEN*. The aim of this study was to compare the cognitive and metacognitive strategy use of sixth-grade students with learning disabilities, low-achieving students, and average-achieving students and to investigate the difference between these strategies. The sample consisted of 150 sixth-grade students including 50 students with learning disabilities, 50 low-, and 50 average-achieving students. Think-aloud protocols were applied to identify the strategies. The data were analyzed through R programming language. The students with learning disabilities used less cognitive and metacognitive strategies than their low- and average-achieving peers when solving math problems with different difficulty levels. The results were discussed within the framework of the relevant literature and theoretical approaches. The suggestions were made for further research and implementation.

The sixth research article in this issue with the title of “*Investigation of the Gifted Students’ Education Based on Its Cost*” was authored by *Figen ÇAM-TOSUN* and *Sema TAN*. The purpose of this research was to investigate the cost parents paid for their gifted and non-gifted children, the type of expenses they made for their children’s education and their opinions regarding the financial demands of their gifted children. In this qualitative study with a phenomenological approach, the data were collected from 20 parents of gifted and non-gifted students using structured interview forms. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analysis. The findings indicated that the parents spent the most on school supplies for both gifted and non-gifted children for in-school environment. However, for out-of school expenditures parents spent the most on books, movies, and intelligence games for their gifted children while they spent the most on field trips and movies for their non-gifted children. Parents could not fully support the development of their children (especially gifted ones) due to their financial conditions. Also, parents reported that opportunities in regular schools were not enough to help their children realize and fulfill their own potential. It was concluded that gifted children needed environments enriched with more materials, sources, mentors, and facilities to reveal their true potential.

The seventh article which was conducted by *Fatma Nur AKTAŞ* and *Ziya ARGÜN* namely “*The Needs and Problems of Individuals With Visual Impairment in Mathematics Education: The Context of Algebraic Concepts.*” This study aimed to identify the needs and problems of individuals with visual impairment in learning mathematics in the context of algebraic concepts. A multiple case-embedded study design was employed. Twelve participants were included. Content analysis was utilized in the qualitative data analysis obtained through semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed five themes: Supportive and/or individualized training needs, needs for supportive training resources, problems arising from the nature of mathematics, affective factors and problems in the exams. The results indicated that the needs and problems formed a relational pattern that triggered each other. Therefore, when the needs and problems in the findings were examined, the themes were in a cause-effect relationship with each other. Although the results were discussed specifically for mathematics education, needs covering supportive education applications and tools, in general, have been determined. It is obvious that the needs that were waiting for a solution cause the problems in practice. The participants with visual impairment were reported to hold misconceptions about the concepts of variable, unknown, equation and its solution, equality, inequality, function along with the lack of concept knowledge. Accordingly, there is a need for concept-oriented research to improve educational practices.

The last research article in this issue with the title of “*Gifted Students’ Reasons for Participating in Waste Management Themed Nature Education and Post-Training Views*” was authored by *Özge CEYLAN* and *Zeynep ASLAN*. This study supported by Turkey Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), it was aimed to examine the reasons gifted students participate in waste management themed nature

education and their opinions about education. The method of the study was a case study which is one of the qualitative research methods. The study group consisted of 29 5th to 6th grade gifted students enrolled in science and art centers (SACs) in Istanbul. Students' views about the project that lasted for 5 days in June 2019 were analyzed using content analysis. The data were collected through the application form and project evaluation form prepared by the researchers, and the diaries were collected from the participants. Findings showed that students mostly participated in the project because of their knowledge, development of various skills and love for nature. At the beginning of the project, the students' level of knowledge about waste management was basic and intermediate. Also, they had positive opinions about the project, gained high-level knowledge about waste management, developed thinking skills, reached social and emotional satisfaction, and gained environmental awareness. It was seen findings of previous research are consistent with those in the current study. This research could contribute to the preparation phase of out-of-school education and nature education practices and similar projects for gifted students.

The first review article of this issue was authored by *Çiğdem TIKIROĞLU* and *Arzu ÖZEN* namely "*Peer-Mediated Interventions to Improve Social Interaction in Early Childhood Inclusive Practices.*" This study aimed to provide information about Peer-Mediated Instruction/Intervention which is used for fostering social interaction between children with autism spectrum disorder and typically-developing children in early childhood inclusive practices. In accordance with this purpose, the aim of Peer-Mediated Instruction/Intervention, their characteristics, benefits and limitations for children with autism spectrum disorder and typically-developing peers were described. The information was given about the classification of these interventions and implementation procedure. Previous studies related to Peer-Mediated Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Interventions were presented. The findings of these studies were discussed in terms of future research and early childhood inclusive practice.

The second review article of this issue is "*Gifted Underachievement: Characteristics, Causes and Interventions*" which was authored by *Mehmet BIÇAKÇI* and *Mustafa BALOĞLU*. The aim of this study was to examine the definitions, characteristics, criteria, and intervention of underachievement among gifted students through an extensive literature review. The study covered multiple databases. The main factors that were reported to affect underachievement among gifted students were classified into household-related, personal, and school-related. The methods such as mentoring, family counseling, and teacher support came to the forefront among various underachievement interventions. It was suggested that a more holistic assessment method that would use multiple data points and intervention programs in dealing with underachievement among gifted students needed to be developed.

I would like to kindly thank once again my colleagues for their vigorous efforts who are working with me on the Editorial Board for our journal to be published timely and to increase the quality. I would like to thank our dear readers, authors, and reviewers for their support and contributions once again and I would like to kindly request you to continue your support and contributions during the ongoing process. I wish to be with you again in the upcoming issue which will be published in December 2021...

Prof. Hatice BAKKALOĞLU