

## From the Editor...

Dear Readers,

We are with you again with the Ankara University Faculty of Educational Sciences Journal of Special Education's first issue of March 2024, Volume 25, Issue 1. 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.

In this issue of our Journal, there are six research articles. I would like to briefly introduce them to our readers. The first research article in the current issue includes a study of *Ahmet BİLDİREN, Tahsin FIRAT, and Sevinç Zeynep KAVRUK* namely "A School Life from Learning Disability to Giftedness." This study in which the researchers tried to answer the question of "Can a student with learning disability pass the university exam and get into the faculty of medicine?" the aim was to examine the strengths and weaknesses of Fatih who succeeded in getting into the faculty of medicine despite academic failure and to determine strategies he used against problems. Case study among qualitative research methods was used as the study model. Through family interviews, interviews with Fatih, the drawings of Fatih and result of intelligence test, areas he had difficulties as well as those he was gifted were analyzed. Results of the study revealed that Fatih was suffering from learning disability since primary school, he struggled especially in the Turkish lesson, and he was experiencing academic failure. Despite his academic failure, he performed well in the field of mathematics. In addition, he was gifted in general mental ability and that he is extraordinarily skilled at painting. When the strengths and weaknesses of Fatih were taken into consideration, it was asserted that he is a gifted student with learning disability. The results were discussed within the context of identifying gifted individuals with learning disability.

The second study namely "An Examination of Characters with Special Needs in Juvenile Books" was conducted by *Hüseyin ÖZTÜRK, Kemal AFACAN, Mustafa CEYLAN, and Ali KIRCI*. In this research, the researchers examined the books that include individuals with special needs as characters in terms of their structure, depiction, and developmental characteristics. The study utilized document analysis model, one of the qualitative research methods, in which the authors examined the characters with special needs according to various criteria. They evaluated thirty-eight books in the study. While identifying the books, they sought that the books appealed to juvenile and included at least one character with special needs. The authors analyzed the books with the content analysis technique. Results showed eleven different disability types in the 38 books. Of these, 10 were visual impairment, 11 were physical disabilities, six were hearing impairment, six were intellectual disability, six were autism spectrum disorder (ASD), five were cerebral palsy, three were speech and language disorders, three were gifted, one was specific learning disability, one was attention deficiency and hyperactivity disorder, one was physical disorder. In 33 books, characters had positive depictions; 33 characters had dynamic characteristics, and all of the books had realistic fiction except two. The results of the study differ from the studies in the literature in terms of the variety of special needs of the characters. In terms of the reality of the fictions, the results overlap with the studies in the literature. The rate of dynamic characters in the books that are the subject of this research is higher than past studies. The results regarding the relationship between the characters with special needs and their peers are also consistent with the results of the studies on the topic.

The third research article in this issue is authored by *Gamze ÜNÖZKAN-AKSU, and Mehmet Emrah CANGI* namely "The Relationship between Theory of Mind and Pragmatic Language Skills in Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Children with Typical Development." This study investigated the relationship between theory of mind (ToM) and pragmatics in individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and children with typical development (CTD) and between these skills and Test of Language Development (TOLD-TR) scores which were determined as a participant criterion. Sixteen individuals with ASD with TOLD-TR test equivalent age 7;0-8;11 and 46 CTD aged 6;0-8;11 were included. Child Form of Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test (RMET), Strange Stories Test, and Pragmatic Language Skills Inventory (PLSI) were used. PLSI and RMET scores as well as PLSI and Strange Stories scores did not significantly correlate in the ASD group. Nevertheless, in CTD, there were many weak-to-moderate level significant relationships between Strange Stories and PLSI subtest scores. In both groups, there were significant relationships between all TOLD-TR subtest scores and Strange Stories scores, except for TOLD-TR Syntactic Understanding in the ASD group. Numerous weak-to-strong correlations between TOLD-TR and PLSI scores as well as between TOLD-TR and ToM scores were found in the CTD group. In the ASD group, however, moderate-to-strong relationships between Strange Stories and the TODIL composite, between Sentence Comprehension and Morpheme Completion, and between RMET and Morpheme Completion. It emerged that groups could have different patterns of interaction between these variables. The lack of correlation between ToM and pragmatics in ASD may be explained by the relatively small sample size and the fact that the norm group of the PLSI was largely composed of CTD. Additionally, the importance of sentence and syntax comprehension in ToM was revealed.

*Elvan BARAN-KARALAR, Atlas BOGENÇ, and Tevhide KARGIN* authored the fourth research article namely “*An Investigation on the Opinions of Class and Guidance Teachers About the Challenges in Mainstream Education.*” This research aimed to determine the opinions and suggestions of classroom and guidance teachers working in primary schools in Istanbul regarding the difficulties they experience in inclusion practice. In the study in which the case study model, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was used; semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven classroom teachers who have inclusion students in their classroom and six psychological counselor/guidance teachers who have inclusion students in their school. By applying content analysis to the data obtained from the interviews, the main themes and sub-themes were formed, and the findings were reached. Research findings show that classroom teachers prepare the individualized education program (IEP) with the help of the guidance teacher. The school administration does not have enough information about the inclusion practice because the classrooms are crowded. Thus, the teachers have difficulty in gaining academic skills, as well as finding and adapting appropriate materials for mainstreaming students. Counselors, on the other hand, state that the IEP development unit remains on paper, that all responsibilities related to IEP are assigned to them, and that the school administration does not cooperate on inclusion. In addition, both classroom teachers and guidance teachers stated that the communication and cooperation they established with the institutions where the student received support education was one-sided and they did not receive any feedback regarding the student. The fact that families do not accept their children's inadequacy, and do not have enough information about inclusion, is another finding that makes cooperation difficult for classroom and guidance teachers. The findings obtained from the research revealed the necessity of the classroom and guidance teachers to be in cooperation with the school, family and stakeholders who provide support education to the students in the inclusive practice. This cooperation will enable the student's educational process to improve their learning better. It is recommended to conduct experimental studies based on school-family cooperation in similar studies.

The fifth article which was conducted by *Meryem UÇAR-RASMUSSEN, and İlknur ÇİFÇİ-TEKİNARSLAN* is namely “*Teaching Sexual Abuse Prevention Skills to Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities.*” This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the curriculum developed in line with the cognitive process approach in helping people with intellectual disabilities to acquire the skill of sexual abuse prevention. The study was designed with the multiple probe model across participants, one of the single-subject research methods, and baseline, instruction, probe, and generalization phases were used. Three 12–14-year-old female students with intellectual disability were included in the study. An instructional program based on the social decoding, social decision making/deciding, social performance, and social evaluation stages of the cognitive process approach was prepared to teach the target skill to the participants. The program made use of stories about sexual abuse situations and how to avoid these situations, as well as pictures depicting these stories. Participants were taught three prevention skills to avoid sexual abuse: "saying no", "getting out of the environment", and "telling what occurred to someone they trusted.” At the end of the study, it was concluded that the developed instructional program was effective in helping three female students in acquiring the sexual abuse prevention skills. This effect can be explained both by the increase in the data collected during the teaching process and by the fact that the probe data collected at the end of the instruction were higher than the probe data collected before the instruction. The findings obtained from the research were discussed in the light of the studies in the literature and suggestions were made for further studies.

The sixth and the last research article in this issue namely “*Evaluating the Perspectives of Teachers with Hearing-impaired Students on their Professional Competencies*” was authored by *Özlem ASLAN-BAĞCI, and Hakan SARI*. This study aimed to identify the teacher needs for the teacher competency training program in hearing impairments that was developed for teachers of hearing-impaired students. Qualitative research design was adopted in this study, and the data were collected by semi-structured interview on the professional knowledge and skills teachers need while teaching hearing-impaired students at different levels (primary, secondary, and high school) in the central districts of Sakarya. The data were analyzed by content analysis. Through the data, the main themes of knowledge about the hearing impaired, communication models and hearing aids, teaching methods and techniques, and academic and professional skills were unfolded. In the literature, there are many studies that reveal the necessity and importance of needs analysis in studies to determine and develop teacher competencies and research results that are consistent with the findings of this study. As a result of this research, what teachers with hearing-impaired students state about the education of hearing impaired are as follows: Definitions, classification and developmental characteristics of hearing-impaired children, diagnosis and evaluation processes, educational approaches and program adaptation, individualized education program (IEP) development and implementation, material preparation and educational environments using technology, communication models, hearing aids and assistive technologies, environment adaptation and effective classroom management. In addition, it was found that teachers neither have sufficient knowledge about family education nor find themselves sufficient in issues regarding hearing-impaired students, so they wanted to receive training. Based on the study results, suggestions, such as supporting teachers with pre-service and in-service training and providing them with expert support, were made.

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 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 second issue of the 25<sup>th</sup> volume which will be published in June 2024...

*Prof. Hatice BAKKALOĞLU*