

## PARENTS ATTITUDES TOWARD THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN TURKEY

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### ABSTRACT

Inclusive education means welcoming all children, without discrimination into regular or general schools. By the change of attitude against differential treatment of education, differences in people will likely be seen in a positive perspective. The research about implementation of inclusive education is a topic of educational interest throughout the world. Within the contemporary inclusive classrooms, teachers face increased pressure as their roles diversify, compared to previous generations. UNICEF, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the European Union take an interest in inclusive education. In this study, we find out about parents attitudes' towards inclusive education in Diyarbakir Turkey. It was clear that both parents and teachers need to be familiar with the field. In addition, during interviews, the emphasis on flexibility in practice came to the fore. In-depth interviews emphasized the importance of including parents who do not internalize discrimination or respect human rights. When teachers and parents alike are adequately equipped, it will be easier for them to internalize the achievements of possible in-service training programs. A short comparison is made between the situation overall in Turkey and in various other countries.

**Keywords:** Implementation of Inclusive Education, Parents Attitudes to Inclusive Education, Education in Turkey, Success of Inclusive Education.

### INTRODUCTION

The research about implementation inclusive education is a topic of educational interest throughout the World (Florian, 2003). Within the contemporary inclusive classrooms, teachers face increased pressure as their roles diversify, compared to previous generations. What is the inclusive education? It is defined as: *Inclusive education is the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school, learn and develop the skills they need to thrive. Inclusive education means all children in the same classrooms, in the same schools. It means real learning opportunities for groups who have traditionally been exclude –not only children with disabilities, but speakers of minority languages too. Inclusive systems value the unique contributions students*

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*of all backgrounds bring to the classroom and allow diverse groups to grow side by side, to the benefit of all. Inclusive education allows students of all backgrounds to learn and grow side by side, to the benefit of all. But progress comes slowly. Inclusive systems require changes at all levels of society (Yong-Wook, 2014).*

Inclusive education means welcoming all children, without discrimination into regular or general schools. By the change of attitude against differential treatment of education differences in people will likely be seen in a positive perspective.

The history of special education is first described followed by an introduction to policies relevant to special and inclusive education. Next, a critical discussion of the state of inclusive education follows built upon the basis of perceived benefits and challenges by teachers involved in implementing inclusive education. This discussion extends further to include broader issues and factors that impact upon the successful implementation of inclusive education, such as teacher education and the relationship between general and special educators (Yong-Wook, 2014).

And, according to unicef programme it is recommended about the solutions as: *At the school level, teachers must be trained, buildings must be refurbished and students must receive accessible learning materials. At the community level, stigma and discrimination must be tackled and individuals need to be educated on the benefit of inclusive education. At the national level, Governments must align laws and policies with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and regularly collect and analyse data to ensure children are reached with effective services (UNICEF, 2021).*

*UNICEF's work to promote inclusive education*

*The education gap for children with disabilities, UNICEF supports government efforts to foster and monitor inclusive education systems. Our work focuses on four key areas:*

*Advocacy: UNICEF promotes inclusive education in discussions, high-level events and other forms of outreach geared towards policymakers and the general public.*

*Awareness-raising: UNICEF shines a spotlight on the needs of children with disabilities by conducting research and hosting roundtables, workshops and other events for government partners.*

*Capacity-building: UNICEF builds the capacity of education systems in partner countries by training teachers, administrators and communities, and providing technical assistance to Governments.*

*Implementation support: UNICEF assists with monitoring and evaluation in partner countries to close the implementation gap between policy and practice.*

As Haug mentioned that the practical state of inclusive education in many countries differs widely, between and even within schools. No country has yet succeeded in constructing a school system that lives up to the ideals and intentions of inclusion, as defined by different international organizations. Placement seems to be the most frequent criterion of inclusive education, to avoid segregation. The quality of teaching and learning processes in inclusive education has lower priority (Haug, 2017).

## RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this research was to evaluate and compare the implementation of inclusive education in Turkey. The research is descriptive. A random sampling technique was impossible because of the limited time available to conduct the research. For efficiency, the research was planned and conducted as a qualitative case study. The research design was determined as a case study. Case studies are based on how and why questions and allow researchers to examine a phenomenon or event that they cannot control in depth (Yıldırım, Şimşek, 2011).

Unlike other types of case studies, it is not an aim to reach general conclusions. The main purpose is to explore the situation, person or phenomenon in its original environment, to describe it in detail, and to interpret (Hays, 2004). In this study, To determine the views of 15 parents on inclusive education and the practices in their institutions.

### Research Questions

The research is expected to answer the following basic questions.

- What is the implementation of inclusive education?
- What are the parents attitudes toward the Implementation of inclusive education in the schools?
- What are the best opportunities for the realization of inclusive education in the schools?

### The limitations

The research is limited to the opinions of the parents whose children are studying in special education in the city of Diyarbakir, Turkey in the 2021-2022 academic year.

The research is limited to the questions and answers given to the parents.

### Data Collection

In the research, data were collected through semi-structured interviews. It was decided that the most appropriate data collection technique that could be used to find answers to the determined research questions was the interview technique. Because the interview technique is very effective in obtaining information about the experiences, attitudes, opinions, complaints, feelings and beliefs of individuals (Yıldırım, Şimşek, 2011). Interviews were conducted using a single interview form within the scope of this research. There are 10 questions in total in the interview form. From the questions formed, a trial interview was made with a parent, and the form was finalized in line with the suggestions obtained and the application was started. During the data collection process, interviews lasting approximately 15-20 minutes were held with each participant.

### Analysis of Data

The collected data were analyzed by descriptive analysis method. In the descriptive analysis technique, the data can be organized according to the themes revealed by the research questions, or it can be presented by considering the questions in the interview.

In descriptive analysis, direct quotations are frequently used in order to reflect the views of the interviewees in a striking way (Yıldırım, Şimşek, 2011). The data transferred to electronic media were carefully read and codes and themes were extracted.

### **SIMILAR STUDIES ELSEWHERE IN TURKEY**

Many articles were published in some journals about the closed subject about inclusive education.

For instance Direk & Dilber, (2020) has published an article as titled “Inclusive Education With The Perspective Of Primary School Principals” that mentioned *As a result of the descriptive analysis of the data; It has been determined that the awareness of the principals of the institutions on inclusive education has increased due to the in-service training they have received recently, they evaluated the inservice training as qualified, and the practices in their institutions are limited to the activities that are requested to be carried out by Ministry of Education in Turkey. As a result, it is recommended to increase the level of knowledge of the principals of the institution about the disadvantaged students, to disseminate the inclusive education approach and to exchange ideas with all the stakeholders of the training for different applications to be carried out in the institutions.*

In another paper, Kazu and Deniz (2019) investigated their research on the refugees from Syria that about inclusive education, as they recommended as followings:

*Results of the research reveal that; training of the teachers should be based on application within the scope of inclusive training, multicultural training applications should be expanded, events towards the students which accelerate the adoption process should be increased, adaptations should be provided in teaching programs, and attention should be paid to the assignment of experienced teachers in key roles in the education of refugee students.*

Another paper was written about “the traces of multiculturalism in the primary education programs in turkey within the context of inclusive education” (Şimşek, Dağistan, Şahin, Koçyiğit, Dağistan Yalçinkaya, Kart, and Dağdelen, 2019) that *63 achievements on multiculturalism have been identified out of 16 courses. By coding, 38 sub-themes were determined; cultural diversity, respect to differences and discovery of differences. Considering sub-themes, it was seen there was sensitivity towards theme of “recognition of differences”. Through encoding sub-themes, three main themes have been produced: “recognition of differences, appreciation and interaction”. In order to be inclusive, curricula must be organized in a way that focuses on interaction and has higher learning objectives.*

### **SIMILAR STUDIES ABROAD**

A few examples of the studies carried out for inclusive education in foreign countries. In Mexico, where school attendance rate of native population is low, a public university invited teachers from within and outside the country to present good examples of inclusive education, and made sure that they were aware of each other’s participation (IEA, 2015).

In Italy, in the academic year 2012/2013, a primary school started an “Open Book” project for inclusive education. This project aimed to set aside didactic methods and to leave it to the teacher and the student to conduct the lesson as they perceived to be the right way—to develop materials suitable for each child, to be collaborative and to change the contents of the books according to need. At the end of the project, teachers returned to using one and the same discipline and didactic method for all of the children. They realized that inclusive education had not worked for them. Moreover, there had been difficulties in teaching the Italian language (IEA, 2015). In 2017-2018, in the European countries of Belgium, Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia inclusive education play centers were established for disadvantaged children, especially from immigrants and minority groups in Europe, as a pilot scheme. The aim here was to facilitate the transition of Roma citizens, and other minority or immigrant children to general schools, as well as to increase their capacities and to establish relationships between young children and families from different backgrounds. The play centers for the above target group were intended to be the start of ongoing plans for development into policy from 2019-2021 (TOY, 2019). In the inclusive education project initiated in Madrid in 2003, the aim was that deaf and non-hearing children learn together, learn sign language and the spoken language at the same time, and continue their normal education in the same class. For this project, in-class corners were created, and digital materials were included together with materials used without a written book. This project succeeded since it was determined that both groups of children were ahead of their peers socially and emotionally (Fernandez-Viader, Fuentes, 2004)

South Africa has adopted an inclusive education policy in order to address barriers to learning in the education system. However, the implementation of this policy is hampered by the lack of skill on the part of teachers, especially their difficulties in differentiating the curriculum to address a wide range of learning needs. Behind the inclusive education policy in South Africa and a brief exposition of an instructional design approach is Universal Design for Learning (UDL) that addresses a wide range of learning needs in a single classroom. A workshop conducted with teachers and therapists in South Africa is supposed to be a first attempt to introduce UDL in this context. Knowledge of UDL was judged to be appropriate and useful by the course participants in the South African context as a strategy for curriculum differentiation in inclusive classrooms. Furthermore, knowledge of the UDL framework facilitates dialogue between teachers and therapists and provides a relatively simple and comprehensive approach for curriculum differentiation. It is therefore concluded that there is potential for this approach that can be expanded through further teacher training (Dalton, Mckenzie, Kahonde, 2012).

## **FINDINGS**

In this section, the findings obtained from the answers given by the parents to the research questions are given. Findings were presented in six main themes in line with the interview questions.

### **1. Findings Related to the Definition of Inclusive Education**

The answers given by the parents to the question of what do you understand by inclusive education environments and inclusive schools were expressed as creating environments where disadvantaged students can receive education comfortably and schools that have such educational environments in inclusive schools (n=11).

### **2. Findings Regarding Disadvantaged Students**

Parents "Which are the disadvantaged groups in the definition of inclusive education?" According to their answers to the question; students with disabilities (n=14), refugee/immigrant students (n=12), students with low socioeconomic status (n=11), novelists (n=8), children from broken families and orphan-orphan students (n=4), delinquent children (n=1), victims of violence (n=1), children under protection by the state (n=1), children employed (n=1) and gifted/intelligent students (n=1).

### **3. Findings Related to Government Policies**

The answers given by the parents to the question of what do you know about the inclusive education policies of the Ministry of National Education and how do you evaluate these policies:

They stated that inclusive education is predominantly in-service training (n=12). In addition, school principals PICTES (n=6), IYEP (n=6) inclusion/integration policies (n=11), education in tent cities (n=1). Majority of the institution principals find these policies beneficial (n=13) and they expressed the opinion that the policies should be expanded to include other disadvantaged individuals (n=2).

### **4. Findings Related to School Implementation**

What practices in your institutions related to inclusive education to parents

PICTES (n=11), IYEP (n=11), support training rooms (n=7), special education classes (n=6), mainstreaming (n=3), social activities (n=2), social benefits (n=2), courses (n=1), psychological counseling support/psycho-social support (n=2), cooperation/joint work among students (n=1), accessibility in physical spaces (n=1) and diversity in learning environments (n=1).

### **5. Findings on the Role and Responsibilities of the Teacher in Inclusive Education**

"What are the roles and responsibilities of the teacher in inclusive education?" When the answers given by the parents to the question were examined, they stated that the teacher is at the center of this work, the main executive is the teacher, the teacher acts as a catalyst, is the person who guides, and that the desired efficiency will be achieved if the teacher believes in this (n=15).

### **6. Findings Regarding the Roles and Responsibilities of Managers in Inclusive Education**

The answers given by the parents participating in the research to the question of what are the roles and responsibilities of institution administrators in inclusive education, support for the teacher (materials, materials, etc.) (n=12), encourage/reward the teacher and motivation (n=12), authorize the teacher (n=9) coordination, planning, programming (n=10, facilitating role of managers (n=9) and manager's belief (n=2)) have expressed their views.

## **7. Findings Regarding the Roles and Responsibilities of Parents in Inclusive Education**

The answers given by the parents participating in the research to the question of what are the roles and responsibilities of parents of students in inclusive education, informing the parents (education, Daily routines, etc.) (n=12), support and motivation (n=12), helping about homework (n=9) programming (n=10, facilitating role of parents (n=9) and parents' belief (n=2)) have expressed their views.

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

Although there are similarities in practice in different countries in terms of the qualifications and competencies that parents should have, different models are used in structuring and revealing competencies. However, one of the most basic competencies that parents should have; It is “knowing the child from every angle”. Another must-have competency is to the school’s ability monitor and evaluate learning and development at school. Keeping in mind that evaluation is a part of the education and training process, the whole process should be auditable.

When teachers, like parents, are adequately equipped, it will be easier for them to internalize the achievements of a possible in-service training program on inclusive education. Parents and teachers need to be familiar with the field. In addition, during the interviews, the emphasis on flexibility in practice came to the fore. In the in-depth interviews, the importance of including parents who do not internalize discrimination and respect human rights in the program was emphasized.

According to Pijl and Meijer, teachers should be supported in terms of methods, materials and in-service training in order to provide an inclusive education environment in their classrooms.

In order to create an inclusive education environment, they should motivate parents, support them, inform them about all processes, as well as provide them with the necessary materials and in-service training support. In addition to the duties of institution managers, they should take a facilitating role against the parents by overcoming bureaucratic obstacles. Teachers should give confidence to parents and at the same time, they should contribute to the spread and development of this understanding by giving them authority when necessary.

In line with the findings obtained from the research, the following suggestions can be made.

- In order for an inclusive education system to be established, students, teachers, parents, school administrators and other stakeholders need to cooperate.
- School principals should ensure that parents use their duties effectively by giving them roles and responsibilities.

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