

Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education: A Mixed Method Study*

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' attitudes play a key role to implement quality education for all. Hence, in the current study teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education (IE) and factors affecting them in the context of Turkey were explored with a mixed method. As a result, it was found out that teachers in Turkey have a narrow conceptualization of inclusive education and mixed attitudes towards it. Furthermore, type and severity of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) was proved to be a significant predictor of embracing IE. Lack of knowledge, training and practical experience were identified as the most influential barriers against IE which also shape and inform teachers' attitudes. The results indicate a need for a change at a societal level, professional teacher development for in-service as well as pre-service teachers, well-established partnership between stakeholders so that teachers can develop more positive attitudes and implement inclusive practices in their teaching contexts.

* This study, which was presented as a master's dissertation at the University of Leeds, has been shortened and converted into an article.



Öğretmenlerin Kapsayıcı Eğitime Yönelik Tutumları: Karma Bir Çalışma

Makale Bilgisi

ÖZET

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Herkes için kaliteli eğitimin temin edilmesinde öğretmenlerin tutumları önemli bir rol oynar. Bu doğrultuda mevcut çalışmada öğretmenlerin kapsayıcı eğitime (KE) yönelik tutumları ve bu tutumları etkileyen faktörler Türkiye bağlamında karma araştırma yöntemiyle incelenmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda, öğretmenlerin kapsayıcı eğitime dair dar anlayışa ve karışık tutumlara sahip olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Ayrıca özel eğitim ihtiyacının türü ve şiddetinin öğretmenlerin kapsayıcı eğitime yönelik tutumlarının önemli bir yordayıcısı olduğu bulunmuştur. Aynı zamanda öğretmenlerin tutumlarını şekillendiren konuya ilişkin bilgi ve eğitim eksikliği ve özel eğitime ihtiyacı olan bireylerle birebir deneyim KE'in önündeki en büyük engeller olarak belirlenmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları öğretmenlerin KE'e yönelik olumlu tutum geliştirerek eğitim ortamlarında daha kapsayıcı bir yaklaşım benimsemeleri için toplumsal düzeyde bir algı değişikliğinin, öğretmenler ve aday öğretmenler için profesyonel gelişim odaklı eğitimlerin, paydaşlar arasında sıkı iş birliği kurulmasının gerekliliğini ortaya koymaktadır.

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education, which supports high-quality, fair learning opportunities for everyone, ensuring no one is excluded (UNESCO, 2020), has gained momentum and priority in the global agenda with the declaration of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994). Since then, governments around the world have confirmed their commitments to this, and following global initiatives such as the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000) and Education 2030 (UNESCO, 2016), they have implemented inclusive policies to ensure education for all. Despite the efforts to leave no one behind, inequalities and barriers persist for too many learners to access quality education, which has even deteriorated with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO, 2020).

Although inclusive education is emphasized and even guaranteed in political documents, as the implementers of these policies, teachers' perceptions of the accommodation of all children with individual differences and needs in diverse classrooms may differ (Savolainen et al., 2020). Considering that in an inclusive school context, it is a prerequisite to meet all students' learning needs and ensure their safety (Nougaret, 2005), positive attitudes towards inclusion play a critical role to ensure education for all in practice in line with the policies.

In this context, investigating teachers' attitudes towards inclusion has gained attention by researchers in recent years (Avradimis et al., 2020). There have been quite many studies conducted on this popular subject around the world (Savolainen et al., 2020), and Türkiye is no exception. Nevertheless, in most of these studies, the notion of inclusion is associated with students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), mostly with a narrower conceptualization of inclusion. Similarly, inclusive education in Türkiye is generally conceptualized as limited to the education of children with SEND and children of Syrian refugees (UNICEF, 2011). Therefore, to contribute to the related literature with a broader conceptualization of inclusive education, the aim of this research is to investigate the factors affecting teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of all students in a diverse teaching context in Türkiye.

Towards Inclusive Education: Do Teachers' Attitudes Matter?

Teachers are the key factors in successful implementation of inclusive education policies since they are the ones with whom the students interact most in their immediate settings at schools. The relationship students have with their teachers influences their progress, and at this point, teacher attitudes play a crucial role (Boyle et al., 2020). Because according to Ajzen (2005), values and attitudes shape the actual behavior. Hence, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion should be investigated to get better insights about the dynamics of IE with the aim of turning inclusive policies into real classroom practices (Fives et al. 2008).

In this regard, as a first step, it is important to understand the nature of teachers' attitudes. Ajzen (2005, p. 3) defines attitudes as "a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event." According to Eagly et al. (1993), attitudes are formed by three components: cognitive (beliefs and knowledge), affective (feelings and emotions), and behavioral (actions or responses), which is adopted as a model in this study.

It is acknowledged that successful implementation of inclusive education policies largely depends on positive teacher attitudes (Avradimis et al., 2000; Boyle et al., 2020;

Saleem, 2017; Saloviita, 2020). Because “commitment to inclusion begins with each educator” (Boyle et al., 2012, p. 77). However, it should also be noted that teachers in favor of inclusion may also feel themselves insufficient to implement inclusive provision (Forlin et al., 2009). Positive attitudes are crucial, yet not enough alone to ensure IE. In this regard, rather than just focusing on whether teachers hold positive or negative values to IE, understanding the factors shaping teacher attitudes and the barriers against it will provide more crucial and fruitful insights to support teachers to implement inclusive practices in the classroom.

Inclusive Education in Türkiye

As a developing country, the Turkish education system relies on Article 42 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to education for everyone for free and compulsory at public schools (Constitution of the Turkish Republic, 1982). Furthermore, Türkiye has also declared its commitment to the global initiatives like the Salamanca Statement, the Dakar Framework for Action, Education 2030, etc.; however, IE still “exists under the umbrella of the special education system” (Erkılıç et al. 2013, p. 466). Therefore, it is no surprise that the legislation of IE in Türkiye has been constructed around SEND. Although the legislation in Türkiye is found to be satisfactory and in harmony with international policies in terms of SEND (Düşkün, 2016), problems and challenges persist in the practice of these laws. Nevertheless, when it comes to gender, language, religion, and ethnicity, equally comprehensive explanations of income were not included in the national legislation (Sarı et al., 2020). Especially in line with the harmonisation process with the EU, some international-funded projects for the other disadvantaged groups, such as Promoting Gender Equality in Education, Promoting Inclusive Education for Syrian Kids in the Turkish Education System, the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme, etc., have been implemented. Further, in close cooperation with UNICEF, support programs and Turkish language classes are being offered to help Syrian students integrate into Turkish schools, with additional measures like catch-up programs and summer schools provided for those who have missed or never attended school. These projects have a special focus on the professional development of teachers via in-service trainings to raise awareness and develop positive attitudes towards inclusion and social justice (MoNE, 2018).

As for the research into IE in the context of Türkiye, many studies have revealed that teachers hold negative attitudes towards IE (Artan et al., 2003; Demir et al., 2010; Gök et al., 2011; Rakap et al., 2010). However, there are also recent studies concluding that teachers have moderately positive attitudes toward inclusion (Tuncay et al., 2020) and make efforts to make use of inclusive strategies in their classroom yet find themselves insufficient about it (Demir-Başaran, 2020). As for the underlying reasons for their negative attitudes, it has been revealed that teachers are not adequately supported by the school management and families of students with SEND (Sadioglu et al., 2010), feel themselves lack of knowledge and confidence to teach in inclusive classes (Aktan, 2020), have difficulty in preparing and applying IEPs (Kocyiğit, 2015), and have problems with classroom management with students with SEND (Kuruyer et al., 2017).

In conclusion, in Türkiye, not only policies but also research have a narrow conceptualization of IE. Most studies on teacher attitudes towards IE have focused on namely children with disabilities and Syrian refugee children (Kesik et al., 2022) and adopted qualitative methods (Yılmaz, 2021). Yet, IE should aim to “remove barriers to learning and participation, allocate resources to support learning and participation, and provide support for

diversity with a perspective providing ground for the voice of marginalized individuals and groups to get heard' (Sakız et al. 2020, p. 297). Therefore, in this study, teacher attitudes towards IE and factors affecting them will be explored with a conceptualization of education for all by employing both qualitative and quantitative methods. In line with this aim, the research questions to be answered are:

- 1-How do the teachers in Türkiye conceptualize IE?
- 2-What are the attitudes of teachers in Türkiye towards IE?
- 3-What are the factors affecting teachers' attitudes towards IE?
- 4-What are the challenges influencing teachers' attitudes towards IE?

METHOD

In this research to explore attitudes of teachers towards IE in Türkiye and the factors affecting them, a mixed methods approach was utilized. Considering that teachers' attitudes depend on a variety of variables, this method will enable us to capture the implications of these variables by using more than one data collection tool (Cohen et al., 2013). From different designs of mixed-type research, the explanatory sequential design, in which first quantitative data is collected via survey, analyzed, and then qualitative data is gathered via semi-structured interviews to get further insights about the patterns (Bryman, 2021).

Sampling and Participants

In this study, considering the time constraint from non-probability sampling techniques, a snowball sampling method was employed in recruiting the participants. In this regard, first I asked my friends working as teachers in Turkey to participate in my research on a voluntary basis and then recommended other possible teachers to be sampled, as Creswell (2018) suggests. In total, 59 teachers participated in the quantitative part of this study. The background information of the participants is summarized in Table 1. It is apparent from the table that most of the respondents were female (82%), aged between 31 and 40 (62%) and work in secondary schools (49%) in urban areas (78%).

Table 1. Demographic information of survey participants

Variable	Groups	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	45	82
	Male	10	18
Age	21-30	11	20
	31-40	34	62
	40+	10	18
Grade Level	Primary	4	7
	Secondary	27	49
Location	High school	24	44
	Suburban	12	22
	Urban	43	78

Table 2 demonstrates the teaching background information of the participants for the survey. The participant teachers mostly have teaching experience of 10–14 years (33%). While 44% of them have no teaching experience with students with SEN, the majority of them (93%) claimed that they received training in in-service trainings, at the university, etc.

Table 2. Teaching background of survey participants

Variable	Groups	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Teaching Experience	Less than 1 year	2	4
	1-4 year	6	11
	5-9 year	15	27
	10-14 year	18	33
	14+	14	25
SEND Experience	Never	24	44
	Less than 2 years	11	20
	2-5 years	7	13
Training in SEN	5+	13	23
	Yes	96	93
	No	4	7

In terms of the participants in the interviews, Table 3 shows that the majority of participants were female (N = 3), working in public schools (N = 3), and with a range of teaching experience. Half of the interviewees had training in IE and experience working with students with SEND.

Table 3. Background information of interviewees

Aliases	Gender	Teaching experience	School type	Training on IE	Experience in SEND
T(1)	Female	9 years	Public	No	Yes
T(2)	Female	3 years	Private	No	No
T(3)	Male	12 years	Public	Yes	Yes
T(4)	Female	16 years	Public	Yes	Yes

Research Instruments and Processes

For the quantitative part of the study, data was collected via questionnaire, while interviews were utilized for the qualitative part. In the process of determining the questionnaire to be used, the related literature was used to find an appropriate instrument for this study and context since the earlier instruments may have been used in different studies and proved to be reliable. Therefore, the below selection criteria were set:

- ✓ investigating IE for all rather than one specific learning difficulty or disability,
- ✓ exploring attitudes based on the three-component model (cognitive, affective, behavioral)
- ✓ having complete psychometric properties.

Among the questionnaires examined, MTAIS (Stoiber et al., 2007) and STORI (Avradimis et al., 2000) were combined since these two tools meet the selection criteria, were used by different researchers, and proved to determine factors affecting attitudes towards inclusion more effectively, as seen in Table 4. In the combined version of the questionnaire, some modifications were made based on the context of Türkiye. The questionnaire was piloted with three teachers. Based on the expert opinions, some changes regarding terminology and wording were made. The questionnaire has 6 different sections, which are respectively an information sheet and consent form, background information, teacher opinions, emotional reactions, intentions, skills, and factors interfering with inclusion practices. It consists of 53 Likert scale items in total, including items like "The needs of students with special educational needs (SEN) are best served through special, separate classes." The overall reliability of the test as measured by Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.84.

Table 4. Properties of questionnaires combined

Authors	Questionnaire	Reliability	Attitude Components/ Dimensions	Limitation(s)
Avradimis et al. (2000)	A Survey of Teacher's Opinions Relative to the Inclusion (STORI)	.90 - .85	1-Cognitive 2-Affective 3-Behavioural	Factors affecting IE as well as methods to improve inclusion is missing
Stoiber et al. (2007)	My Thinking About Inclusion Scale (MTAIS)	.91	1-Core perspectives 2-Expected outcomes 3-Classroom practices	No attitude components

As for the semi-structured interview, the questions were prepared based on the three-component-model of attitudes (Eagly et al. 1993) in line with the questionnaire. In this regard, semi-structured interview questions are determined to seek greater understanding of teachers' conceptualization of IE, how they perceive and feel when they have students with SEN, their self-perception of preparedness to teach in an inclusive setting, and the challenges of inclusive practice.

Data Analysis

To analyze quantitative data for the research questions 2, 3, and 4, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 26 software was used. Since the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results indicated significant results for the whole and sub-scales ($p > .05$), parametric tests were utilized. To investigate teacher attitudes towards IE in general as well as separately based on components of attitude and factors interfering with IE, descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, variance, and standard deviation) were calculated. To test the difference between attitudes and some variables, an independent sample t-test and a one-way ANOVA were applied.

To address questions 1, 3, and 4, reflexive thematic analysis was employed in six phases as outlined by Braun et al. (2013). During the coding, largely inductive analysis was applied, but also deductive coding was adopted to proceed in line with the research questions and quantitative findings. Furthermore, not only semantic but also latent meanings were taken into consideration. At the final stage, 3 themes and 8 sub-themes emerged, as seen in Figure 1.

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Figure 1.

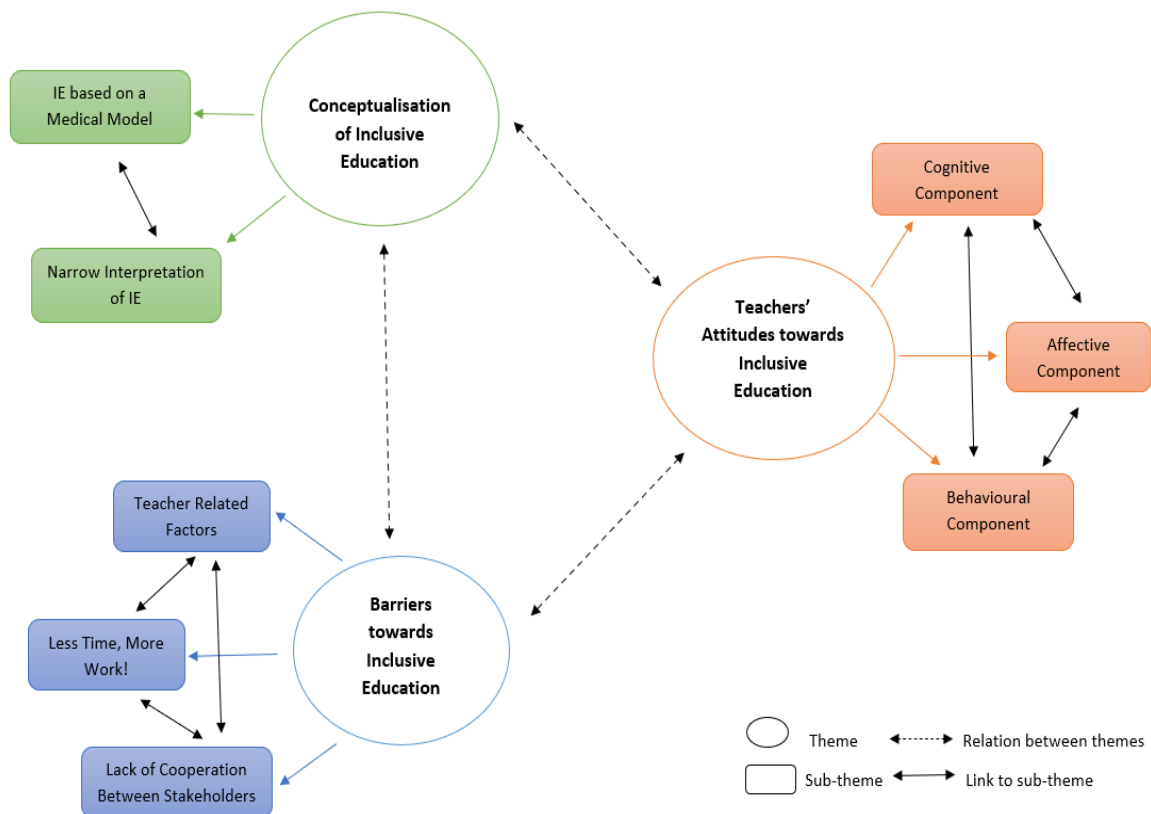


Figure 1. Thematic map

Ethic

This study is found to be ethically appropriate to be conducted with the decision of University of Leeds, School of Education dated 15.06.2022.

RESULTS

The Concept of Inclusive Education

In addressing the first research question based on qualitative data analysis, one theme and two sub-themes were identified as seen in Figure 2. The theme conceptualization of IE explores participants' understandings and definitions of IE throughout the dataset. This theme is interrelated with the other two themes in that teachers' conceptualization of IE shapes and/or informs their attitudes towards IE and barriers towards IE identified by them and vice versa.

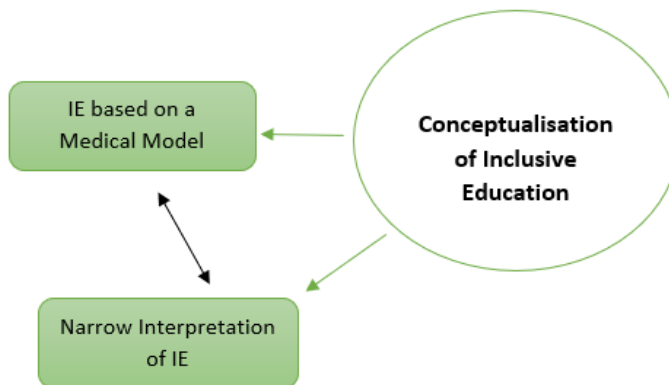


Figure 2. ‘Conceptualization of IE’ theme and its sub-themes

Although IE is viewed as a broad concept, as a quality education for all within the scope of this study, it is revealed that participants have a limited understanding of this term. Teachers limit IE to SEND only rather than inequalities based on ethnicity, gender, religion, socio-economic situation, linguistics, etc. It is also concluded that although some teachers are not sure about its scope, there is a pattern among the responses that teachers use the terms inclusion and mainstreaming interchangeably.

The implicit analysis of the dataset indicates that participant teachers conceptualize IE based on the medical model. They seem to think that students with SEND have certain problems or disorders diagnosed by the ‘experts’ that prevent them from learning in inclusive classes, as seen in the below script from T(2). This idea of IE may also explain why teachers generally seem to be more embracing of IE in terms of social and emotional development of students rather than academic development.

T(2): I think one of the first things to be done is trying to fix the problem these children have. For example, I know that there are medications for hyperactive children. Like that. If there is a solution, we should look for it first. Then, in the second phase, we can think about our skills as teachers.

Teachers’ Attitudes towards Inclusive Education

To answer research question 2 which seeks to explore teachers’ attitudes towards, both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed and findings presented respectively.

Quantitative Findings

Considering the range of the questionnaire which ranges from 1-5 for cognitive and behavioral components and 1-7 for affective one, the mean score for the components of attitudes as a whole and separately demonstrated negative attitudes towards IE for the participants. As Table 5 indicates, the means of cognitive, affective and behavioral components were M= 2.52, 3.37 and 2.03 which are below the central points (3.0 for cognitive and behavioral and 4.0 for affective component). The affective component had the highest mean score which can be interpreted as teachers were more likely to hold negative feelings about accommodating students with severe needs.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics Results for General and Component Attitude Score

	Cognitive Component	Affective Component	Behavioral Component	General Attitudes
Mean	2.52	3.37	2.03	2.73
Median	2.58	3.42	2.12	2.72
Mode	2.67	1.00	2.13a	2.65
Std. Deviation	.50	1.72	.66	.67
Skewness	.354	.416	.624	.129
Std. Error of Skewness	.311	.311	.311	.311
Range	2.50	6.00	3.38	3.35
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	3.50	7.00	4.38	4.35

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

When each component is examined separately with its items, it can be seen in Table 6 that the mean scores for teachers' attitudes on cognitive component range from 1.71 to 3.47.

Table 6. Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Cognitive Component

Items	N	M	SD
1. The needs of students with special educational needs (SEN) are best served through special, separate classes.	59	1.71	.832
2. The challenge of being in an inclusive classroom will promote the academic growth of the child with SEN.	59	2.76	1.179
3. Inclusion offers mixed group interaction which will foster understanding and acceptance of differences.	59	2.24	1.072
4. Isolation in a special class has a negative effect on the social and emotional development of a student with SEN.	59	3.31	1.118
5. The child with SEN will probably develop academic skills more rapidly in a special classroom than in a regular classroom.	58	1.88	.860
6. The contact with included students may be harmful for the other students.	59	3.47	1.165
7. Including the child with SEN will promote his/her social independence.	59	2.20	.906
8. The inclusion of students with SEN can be beneficial for all the students.	59	2.76	1.072
9. Inclusion is likely to have a negative effect on the emotional development of the child with SEN.	59	2.78	1.035
10. The child with SEN will be socially isolated by other students.	59	3.03	1.066
11. Students with SEN should be given every opportunity to function in the general-classroom setting, where possible.	59	2.10	.781
12. The presence of students with SEN will promote acceptance of differences on the part of other students.	59	2.03	.946

The majority of teachers (88%) seem to agree with the idea that 'the needs of children with SEN are best served through special, separate class' (M= 1.71). 84.5 % of them also believe that 'the child with SEN will develop academic skills more rapidly in a special classroom than in a mainstream classroom' (M= 1.88). Although the item 'The contact mainstream-class children have with included children may be harmful' (M = 3.47) is opposed by more than half of the participants (57%), interestingly a considerable number of teachers (25.4%) holds neutral views about it.

Teachers' attitudes in terms of affective dimension were investigated via semantic differential scale consisting of bipolar adjectives such as negative-positive for two situations, severe learning difficulties (LD) and severe emotional and behavioral difficulties (EBD). The mean and standard deviation of affective component for two situations are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for LD and EBD

Feelings	LD			EBD		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Uncomfortable vs Comfortable	59	3.26	2.00	45	3.11	1.95
Negative vs Positive	59	3.77	1.96	45	3.44	2.01
Unconfident vs. Confident	59	3.16	1.94	53	3.00	2.01
Pessimistic vs. Optimistic	59	3.91	2.00	46	3.37	1.91
Worried vs. Assured	59	3.43	1.94	54	3.19	1.99
Disinterested vs. Interested	59	4.78	2.43	46	4.63	2.37

Unhappy vs. Happy 59 3.58 2.01 44 3.45 1.84

As seen in Table 8, the mean values for the behavioral component are ranged from 3.24 to 1.75. It is an interesting finding that except for the first item, most of the participants preferred to choose either agree or neutral options while almost no participant answered strongly disagree. Overall, it can be stated that teachers are willing to develop themselves, their teaching and classroom management skills via trainings, collaboration with parents, self-assessment etc. to provide IE. The mean and standard deviation of affective component for two situations are presented in Table 3.

Table 8. Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Behavioral Component

Items	N	M	SD
1. I will be supportive towards the idea of including children with severe learning difficulties in my classroom.	59	3.24	1.15
2. I will be willing to engage in in-service training on teaching children with severe learning difficulties.	59	1.86	.84
3. I will engage in developing the appropriate skills to teach children with severe learning difficulties in their classroom.	59	1.80	.80
4. I will engage in developing skills for managing the behavior of children with severe learning difficulties.	59	1.75	.70
5. I will accept responsibility for teaching children with severe learning difficulties within a whole-school policy.	59	2.17	.79
6. I will continuously assess myself to inform my teaching practice.	59	1.90	.78
7. I will change my teaching processes to accommodate children with severe learning difficulties in my classroom.	59	1.85	.76
8. I will co-operate with the parents of the children with severe learning difficulties for the benefit of their children.	59	1.71	.76

In this regard, 44.1% of participants were against the idea of including children with severe learning difficulties in their classrooms while a considerable number of them (30.5%) are neutral about it. However, interestingly, 62.7% of them also accepted the responsibility of teaching children with severe difficulties. A majority of participants (88.2%) seemed open to the idea of collaboration with the parents for implementing IE.

Qualitative Findings

This theme focuses on teachers' beliefs, feelings, and actions in inclusive classes. As adopting the three-component-model of attitudes, dataset was analyzed accordingly to complement qualitative findings with quantitative ones and three sub-themes were generated as shown in the Figure 3.

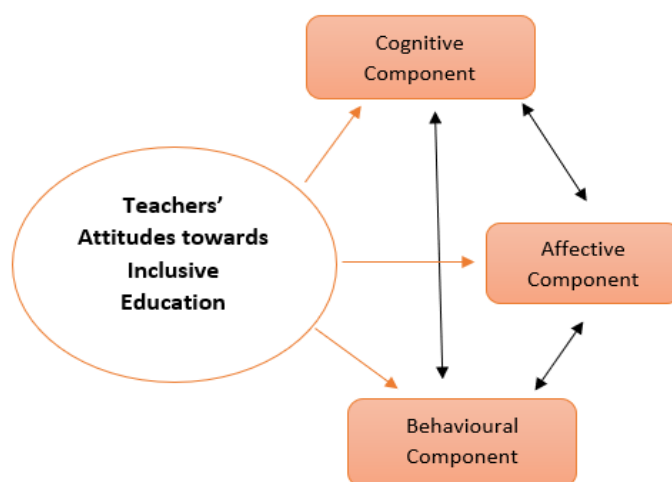


Figure 3. *Teachers' attitudes towards IE' theme and its sub-themes*

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As for the cognitive component, it is apparent in teachers' expressions that participants feel themselves lacking theoretical and practical knowledge about implementing IE, which hinders positive attitudes towards IE.

T(1): First of all, we really don't know what it is or what we should do when we have such students. Therefore, we don't know how to provide quality teaching for all students.

Furthermore, it seems that teachers have dilemmas about the benefits of IE. Although they have positive ideas in terms of the social impact of IE, academically, they do not support the idea of teaching in the same classes for the sake of the progress of both students with SEND and their peers.

T(4): For the student with disability, if the disability is mild, s/he can adapt to the environment. But if the mental disability is severe, it is obviously difficult. It is difficult for other students as well as for that child. They stand up a lot in class and disrupt the teacher's lecture.

As for the affective component, teachers generally state negative emotions like "desperate, anxious, worried" to describe their feelings when they have a student with severe needs. Furthermore, when the dataset is considered as a whole and as seen in the below scripts, it can be deduced that their negative feelings might stem from their lack of theoretical and practical knowledge about IE, which proves the intertwined nature of themes/sub-themes.

T(2): First of all, I would feel very ignorant, which would probably make me worried. Since I haven't received any training on this, I would feel anxious because I did not know how to behave or teach! I could have an anxiety problem. I think these are the emotions I would feel the most.

In terms of the behavioral component, participants mostly stated that they do not carry out any activity or apply strategy or method to foster inclusion, as seen in the below script. It also seems that they do not feel responsibility for doing so. When this finding is considered together with their conceptualization of an IE-based medical model, it is not surprising, though.

T(1): I can't say that I use a special strategy or activity for it. But, in the past, when I had

this kind of student, I tried to teach them individually. But I can't really say that it worked indeed. I mean, I couldn't really succeed in it.

Factors Affecting Teachers Attitudes Towards Inclusion

Factors affecting teachers' attitudes towards inclusion were analyzed and findings presented respectively.

Interaction with someone with SEND

As seen in Table 9, the independent samples t-test indicates that there is no significant difference between teachers who had someone in their close environment with SEN and who did not on attitudes towards IE ($t=-.342$, $df=57$, $p=0.734$, equal variances assumed, Cohen's $d=0.10$). The mean scores for participants knowing someone in their close environment with SEN and without were 2.68 and 2.75 respectively and according to the usual effect size guidance (Cohen, 1988), this difference is 'small'.

Table 9. Independent Samples T-Test Results For General Attitude Score according to

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
General Attitudes	Equal variances assumed	.142	.707	-.342	57	.734

Interaction with Someone with SEND

Training

As seen in Table 10, the independent samples t-test indicates that there is no significant difference on attitudes towards IE between teachers who received training and those who did not ($t=-.182$, $df=57$, $p=0.856$, equal variances assumed, Cohen's $d=0.09$). The mean scores for participants with training and without were 2.74 and 2.67 respectively and according to the usual effect size guidance (Cohen, 1988), this difference is 'small'.

Table 10. Independent Samples T-Test Results for General Attitude Score according to Training

		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
General Attitudes	Equal variances assumed	.055	.816	.182	57	.856

Factors Affecting Teachers Attitudes Towards Inclusion

While addressing this research question, both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied which will be elaborated respectively.

Quantitative Findings

In this study teachers were also asked about the challenges affecting their attitudes towards IE. As Table 11 shows, the mean values ranged from 1.80 to 2.05. The limited time had the highest mean score ($M=2.05$, $SD=1.26$) whilst parent's attitudes had the lowest ($M=1.80$, $SD=1.03$). Overall, it can be stated that there is not a considerable amount of difference between mean values of challenges rated by teachers.

Table 11. Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for The Challenges against IE

Challenges	N	Mean	SD
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Limited time	59	2.05	1.26
Limited opportunities for collaboration	59	2.02	1.20
Teacher attitudes	59	2.00	1.19
Lack of experience regarding inclusion	59	2.00	1.23
Little knowledge in this area	59	1.97	1.17
Current work commitments	59	1.95	1.41
Lack of material	59	1.92	1.14
Little support from school/district	59	1.83	1.20
Parents' attitudes	59	1.80	1.03

Lack of knowledge and experience regarding inclusion were found to be the most salient barriers against IE by majority of the teachers (80%). The least influential barrier on the other hand was limited time although 71% of teachers agreed that it interfere with IE. As seen in Table 20, the percentages of the factors are close to each other. Hence, it can be concluded that limited collaboration, teachers' attitudes, current work commitments, parents' attitudes and lack of materials were determined as factors hindering inclusive practices by teachers. Finally, it is notable that the item 'teacher attitudes' was also rated as a salient challenge by most participants (74%).

Qualitative Findings

The theme 'barriers against IE' explores the challenges teachers encounter while implementing IE which might affect their attitudes towards inclusion negatively. Three sub-themes, which are namely 'teacher related factors', 'less time, more work' and 'lack of cooperation between stakeholders' were identified to explain factors hindering IE as shown in the Figure 4.

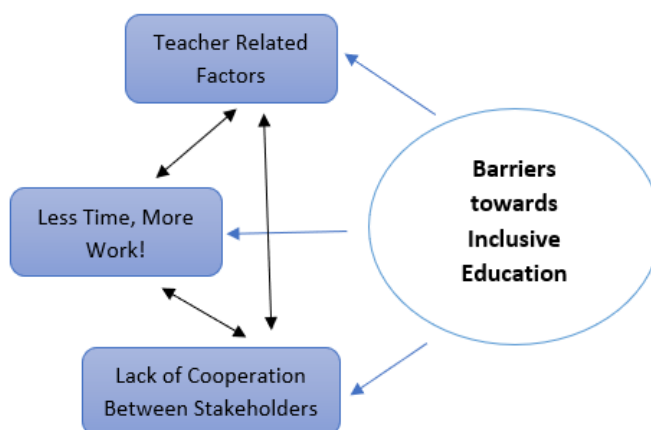


Figure 4. 'Barriers to IE' theme and its sub-themes

Throughout the dataset, lack of knowledge and the need for training to implement IE were constantly articulated by teachers. Teachers' accounts also provide some insights regarding the level and content of the trainings. Accordingly, equipping student teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills at the university level is of importance, as seen in the script from T(1). However, current trainings on the subject were found limited in that they do not offer much about practice in real contexts.

T(1): The best thing to be done will be training. It could be a kind of in-service teacher training as well as pre-service teacher training for prospective students. But these trainings should be based on practice rather than theoretical.

As for the challenges faced by teachers while implementing IE in class due to time constraints and workloads, It can be concluded that there is a bigger problem underlying these barriers, which is the exam-oriented education system. The evidence in the below extracts shows that the main priority for teachers is to prepare students for the national exams, which hinders IE by ignoring the needs and rights of students with SEND.

T(1): Due to lack of time and the number of students in a class, we now have sometimes more than 35 students; we are not able to teach these students individually. We have a curriculum to follow and a responsibility to prepare others for the national exams, so I believe, for the sake of all sides, it is better to educate them in separate classes.

In terms of cooperation between stakeholders, as key partners, parents were viewed as not open to collaboration. Instead, they were defined as resistant to accepting the situation of their children in most cases, which can be seen in the below extract:

T(2): Secondly, when we talk with parents about their children's academic problems and learning difficulties, we have a really hard time. Because they are too sensitive about their children and we talk about something negative, they take it personally somehow. They perceive it as if we speak ill of their children. But what we try to do is just inform them about the realities and try to solve the problem if we can.

In terms of the cooperation with the school management, there were different views based on school types. While T(2), working in a private school, underlined the communication problems due to school management's concerns for commercial profits, public school teachers stated that the school management was embracing and fulfilling their responsibilities for IE. However, what teachers meant by responsibility of the management is equal placement of students with SEND into mainstream classes, which is again related to teachers' limited conceptualization of IE focusing on the accession to education, mainly as seen in the script from T(4).

T(4): Frankly, I have had no problems with the school administration based on my own more than 15 years of experience. The administration is supportive in this sense. Because they accept students with SEND and try to place them equally in each class.

DISCUSSION

It was found out that teachers in Türkiye conceptualize IE narrowly—mostly limited to integration. It was revealed that although the teachers were inclined to use the term inclusion interchangeably with mainstream education, which is also interpreted as educating the students with SEND with their peers under the same roof. The findings of this study are consistent not only within the context of Türkiye (e.g., ERI, 2016; Erkılıç, 2013; Sarı et al., 2020) but also around the world (e.g., Arduin, 2015; Forlin, 2009), which is not surprising as any political updates in terminology might not be internalized by the society unless it complies with the current social realities and beliefs (Wedel, 2009).

It is apparent in the latent and semantic meanings of the interviews that IE is viewed according to a medical model in which teachers generally perceive SEND as a deficit, disorder, or attribute of the students rather than socially generated labels (Hodkinson, 2015; Demetriou, 2020). Earlier and recent studies in Türkiye have also yielded similar results (Erkılıç, 2013; Kesik et al., 2022; Rakap et al., 2010). This conceptualization may explain other findings, such as teachers' not feeling responsible for implementing quality IE for all and advocating the idea of separate classes for those students, which signals a need for change at a societal level for a quality IE.

Within the context of the second research question, teachers were found to hold mixed attitudes, mostly negative close to the neutral. In the context of Türkiye, while earlier studies indicated negative attitudes (Artan et al., 2003; Demir et al., 2010; Gök et al., 2011; Rakap et al., 2010), there are also current studies (Demir-Başaran, 2020; Tuncay et al., 2020) concluding positive attitudes. When studies around the world are concerned, it can be concluded that research in developing countries has indicated generally negative or moderately positive attitudes (Al-Zyoudi, 2006; Ramli, 2017; Saleem, 2017), while quite the reverse can be observed in developed countries (Lorman et al., 2007; Saloviita, 2020).

It was also revealed that teachers were more welcome to accommodate children with mild needs rather than severe intellectual and behavioral needs. Both quantitative and qualitative findings assured that the type and severity of SEND is an important determinant for embracing IE for teachers, which is in line with the findings of previous studies (Avradimis et al., 2000; Ramli, 2017; Saleem, 2017; Saloviita, 2020).

As for training on IE, no significant difference was found in the current study between teachers who had received training and those who had not. This finding is inconsistent with earlier research in the Turkish context (e.g., Bayar et al., 2017; Karasu, 2019; Ozokcu, 2018). Similarly, in the interviews, teachers consistently highlighted the importance of teacher training throughout the dataset. The contradiction might stem from the current nature of training on IE, which is described by the interviewees as theory-based, perfunctory training. In this regard, training alone may not be sufficient for teachers to develop affirmative attitudes toward IE (Costello et al., 2013).

In the literature, teachers' attitudes were closely associated with interaction with someone with SEND (Avradimis et al., 2002; Rakap et al., 2010; Özokçu, 2018; Tuncay et al., 2020). However, based on the quantitative data, it was not found to influence teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. When qualitative findings were considered in this context, it can be stated that teachers believe interaction with students with SEND in the class helps other students to develop empathy; however, they also think that these students prevent other students' academic progress, which can also be interpreted as signs of a medical model. When all these findings evaluated together, it can be claimed that qualitative findings explain for quantitative findings in that due to their conceptualization of IE based on a medical approach, interaction with someone with SEND was not found to be a significant predictor for teachers' attitudes towards IE.

Although implementation of inclusive education highly relies on teachers, teachers practices as well as their attitudes can be negatively affected by many factors. In this context, lack of knowledge, training, and experience on IE seemed to be the most influential factor interfering with inclusive practices, according to teachers supporting similar findings reported by Avradimis et al. (2007). Furthermore, parents' as well as teachers' attitudes, limited time, and lack of partnership and collaboration were also reported as the salient barriers against inclusion. In addition to these, qualitative data reflected that crowded classes in Türkiye hinder implementation of quality IE.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Societal values shape education systems (Arduin, 2015). Teachers in this study portrayed a narrow conceptualization and mixed attitudes close to the negative and neutral towards IE, which can be interpreted as the reflections of beliefs, understanding, and approaches Turkish society has about inclusion. Hence, it can be argued that to achieve the goal of quality IE for all, a mindset change is necessary at a societal level, including teachers, who are the key persons of educational

change. On the other hand, it is obvious that such a macro-level change will not take place shortly and easily (Wedel, 2010). One of the best and fastest ways can be using media and communication as means, considering our era of technology.

It was found out that teachers are concerned about teaching in inclusive classes due to their lack of knowledge and practical experience. In this regard, MoNE should provide hands-on professional development opportunities for teachers to equip them with the necessary skills to meet all students' needs in the class. Considering teachers' accounts of the perfunctory nature of current trainings, these trainings should be organized based on the needs of teachers and applicable to the classroom contexts. Furthermore, for the prospective teachers, regardless of their teaching subject, IE should be taught as a compulsory module at the university level by the Council of Higher Education. Because it is easier to develop positive attitudes towards inclusion during undergraduate initial teacher training programs (Loreman et al., 2013). As for the other barriers identified in this study, MoNE should also take necessary steps with regard to class size, materials, and human resources to ensure implementation of IE.

At a school level, a well-established partnership should be built between school management, teachers, and parents, which is one of the fundamentals of achievement in IE (Beveridge, 2005). In this regard, school management's responsibility should be seen as more than equal placement of students with SEND into mainstream classes, and they should be active partners and actors of education for all. As underlined in this study, parental involvement was not found adequate by teachers; however, it should also be noted that engaging parents in inclusive education is also the responsibility of school management and policymakers, as Csozier (2000) puts forth.

In conclusion, teachers are at the heart of teaching, and their attitudes towards inclusion, willingness to accommodate all children in their classes, and perception of self-confidence to work with students with individual differences and needs determine the effectiveness of inclusive education practices (McLeskey et al., 2001). Therefore, understanding teachers' attitudes and the factors affecting them is of great importance, and this study revealed that teachers' positive attitudes and inclusive practices are multidimensional, depending on not only themselves but also related partners, educational environments, policies, and society. Accordingly, in order to develop positive attitudes for teachers that will inform and shape their actions in inclusive settings, collaboration and commitment from all stakeholders are key factors in promoting education for all.

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