

MULTIPLE DISABILITIES IN THE SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES REGULATION: AN ANALYSIS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION¹

Hülya TORUN YETERGE²

Article Information	Abstract
Article Type: Research Article	Special education focuses on the individualization of educational processes in line with individuals' diverse developmental characteristics and needs. This field requires flexible and individualized educational arrangements, particularly for individuals with multiple disabilities, whose needs may vary across different developmental and support domains. Multiple disabilities refer to the co-occurrence of more than one disability, affecting learning, communication, mobility, and adaptive skills in multidimensional ways. Therefore, educational processes for individuals with multiple disabilities may include coordinated support practices such as physical accessibility arrangements, interdisciplinary collaboration, support services, and individualized education programs, depending on individual needs. Although inclusive education policies aim to ensure equal access to education for all individuals, it remains unclear how individuals with multiple disabilities are positioned and supported within these policies. The study was conducted through document analysis within a qualitative research framework, using the current version of the regulation as the primary data source. The data were examined thematically with a focus on the themes of definition, positioning, accessibility, support services, and individualization processes. This study aims to examine the Special Education Services Regulation from the perspective of multiple disabilities within the context of inclusive education. Findings indicate that provisions related to multiple disabilities remain limited and general, with insufficient guidance for practice, highlighting a gap between policy and implementation.
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² Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Adıyaman Üniversitesi, htorunyeterge@adiyaman.edu.tr, Orcid ID:0000-0002-0042-4386

ÖZEL EĞİTİM HİZMETLERİ YÖNETMELİĞİNDE ÇOKLU YETERSİZLİK: KAPSAYICI EĞİTİM PERSPEKTİFİNDEN BİR İNCELEME

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Özet

Özel eğitim, bireylerin farklı gelişimsel özellikleri ve gereksinimleri doğrultusunda eğitim süreçlerinin bireyselleştirilmesini amaçlayan bir alandır. Bu alan, özellikle çoklu yetersizliği olan bireyler açısından, bireysel gereksinimlere duyarlı, bütüncül ve esnek eğitim düzenlemelerini gerekli kılmaktadır. Çoklu yetersizlik, birden fazla yetersizliğin bir arada bulunması sonucu ortaya çıkan ve bireyin öğrenme, iletişim, hareket ve uyum becerilerini farklı boyutlarda etkileyebilen bir durumdur. Bu nedenle, çoklu yetersizliği olan bireylerin eğitim süreçleri; bireysel gereksinimlere bağlı olarak fiziksel erişilebilirlik düzenlemeleri, destek hizmetler, disiplinler arası iş birliği ve bireyselleştirilmiş eğitim programları gibi çeşitli uygulamaları içerebilmektedir. Kapsayıcı eğitim politikaları tüm bireylerin eğitim hakkını güvence altına almayı amaçlasa da, çoklu yetersizliği olan bireylerin bu politikalar içerisindeki konumu ve desteklenme biçimleri yeterince açık değildir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Özel Eğitim Hizmetleri Yönetmeliği'ni çoklu yetersizlik perspektifinden kapsayıcı eğitim bağlamında incelemektir. Araştırma, nitel araştırma yaklaşımı kapsamında doküman analizi ile yürütülmüş ve veri kaynağını yönetmeliğin güncel metni oluşturmuştur. Veriler; çoklu yetersizlik tanımı, kapsayıcı eğitimde konumlandırma, erişilebilirlik, destek hizmetler ve bireyselleştirme süreçleri temaları çerçevesinde tematik olarak incelenmiştir. Bulgular, yönetmelikte çoklu yetersizliğe ilişkin düzenlemelerin sınırlı ve genel nitelikte kaldığını ve uygulamaya yönelik yönlendirmelerin yeterince ayrıntılandırılmadığını göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, politika ile uygulama arasındaki ilişkiye dikkat çekerek kapsayıcı eğitim süreçlerinin daha bütüncül biçimde değerlendirilmesine katkı sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Special education policies play a critical role in ensuring access to education for individuals with special educational needs and in determining the quality of the services provided (Aksoy & Şafak, 2020; Slee, 2013). These policies not only regulate access to education but also constitute the fundamental framework that determines how educational services are delivered, the principles upon which they are structured, and the extent to which they respond to individuals' needs. In the development of a high-quality and inclusive special education system, how policy-level decisions are translated into practice is of great importance (Artiles et al., 2011). In this context, the scope, content, and applicability of special education policies significantly influence the effective participation of individuals with special educational needs in educational processes (Florian, 2015). In Türkiye, one of the primary legal regulations guiding the field of special education is the Special Education Services Regulation, which serves as an important reference point within this framework (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2018; MoNE, 2021; MoNE, 2022).

The Special Education Services Regulation was first enacted in 2006 (MoNE, 2006) and was substantially revised in 2018 in line with changing educational approaches and emerging needs (MoNE, 2018). The regulation serves as a guiding policy document covering areas such as educational assessment, placement processes, support services, and individualized education programs. Since 2018, the regulation has been amended several times (MoNE, 2020; MoNE, 2021; MoNE, 2022). These amendments indicate that the regulation maintains a dynamic structure in response to emerging needs in the field of special education.

When the content of the Special Education Services Regulation is examined, it is evident that various provisions are included for individuals with different types of disabilities. While detailed explanations are provided regarding how educational services should be delivered for different disability groups such as visual, hearing, intellectual disabilities, and autism spectrum disorder, it is noteworthy that the concept of multiple disabilities—referring to the co-occurrence of more than one type of disability—is addressed only to a limited extent (MoNE, 2018; MoNE, 2022). However, the manner in which multiple disabilities are addressed in the regulation is largely confined to general statements, and it appears that detailed, group-specific guidance has not been sufficiently developed. Similarly, a review of the literature indicates that the concept of multiple disabilities is often addressed indirectly in both research and policy documents and is generally subsumed under the broader category of “individuals with special educational needs” (Giangreco, 2020; Downing, 2008). This situation reduces the visibility of the unique needs of individuals with multiple disabilities and leads to educational planning being approached within a more generalized framework. In contrast, individuals with multiple disabilities differ from other groups not only because they have more than one disability, but also because they possess complex, multidimensional, and dynamic needs arising from the interaction of these disabilities (Brown et al., 2015; Snell & Brown, 2010). In order to provide effective support in their educational processes, it is necessary to adopt individualized, holistic approaches based on interdisciplinary collaboration (Westling & Fox, 2000; Şafak, 2019). Moreover, simultaneous support needs in areas such as communication, mobility, sensory processing, and self-care require that educational arrangements for this group be structured in a more comprehensive and systematic manner (Brown et al., 2015). In this context, it is evident that multiple disabilities need to be addressed in a more explicit, comprehensive, and specific manner in both policy documents and practice.

Previous studies have also suggested that special education policies and regulations may contain broader implementation-related limitations, particularly regarding individualized support, interdisciplinary collaboration, and inclusive practices (Ainscow, 2020; Florian, 2015; Kurth et al., 2016). In this context, the limitations identified in the present study should not be interpreted as applying exclusively to multiple disabilities. However, individuals with multiple disabilities appear to receive more limited and less explicit attention both in policy documents and in the existing literature. Compared to some other disability categories that are more directly defined and represented within the regulation, provisions specifically addressing multiple disabilities remain relatively less visible and less detailed. This situation may increase the need for clearer and more practice-oriented arrangements tailored to the educational needs of individuals with multiple disabilities.

Understanding how multiple disabilities are addressed within policy documents requires not only examining the content of regulations but also considering how these regulations influence educational experiences across different environmental systems. In this respect, a theoretical framework that explains the relationship between policy structures and individual educational experiences may provide a broader perspective for interpreting the regulation. This study is framed within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in order to understand how special education policies are structured in the context of multiple disabilities. Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes that an individual's development is shaped not only by personal characteristics but also through interactions with the multiple, layered environmental systems in which the individual is embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). According to this theory, development is the product of reciprocal interactions occurring across different system levels: the microsystem (e.g., family, school), the mesosystem (interactions among these

settings), the exosystem (systems that indirectly influence the individual), and the macrosystem (societal and policy structures).

Within this framework, special education policies and legal regulations can be understood as part of the macrosystem, shaping individuals' educational experiences in indirect yet influential ways (Kizir & Memişoğlu, 2017). In this context, policy documents such as the Special Education Services Regulation not only establish general principles but also exert influence across multiple systems, ranging from the organization of educational settings to the provision of support services. Particularly in the case of individuals with multiple disabilities, meeting their needs cannot be achieved solely through arrangements made at the individual level; rather, it requires the coherent and holistic structuring of interactions across systems (Şafak, 2019; Westling & Fox, 2000). Therefore, examining how multiple disabilities are addressed at the policy level provides an important theoretical basis for understanding individuals' experiences across different systems.

In this context, the theoretical foundations and practical uncertainties in the field of multiple disabilities raise questions regarding the extent to which existing policies address this group (Giangreco, 2020). From the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, individual development is shaped not only by personal characteristics but also by the multiple, interconnected systems in which the individual is embedded and the interactions among these systems. Accordingly, special education policies and legal regulations may be understood as operating at the macro level and influencing different dimensions of educational experiences, ranging from the structure of educational settings to the provision of support services (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). However, considering the multidimensional needs associated with multiple disabilities, the extent to which these needs are systematically reflected in policy documents remains open to discussion. Although the principle of inclusion is emphasized at the policy level, how this principle is interpreted and implemented in practice for individuals with multiple disabilities may vary across contexts (Bourke et al., 2026). This situation may contribute to differences in implementation among practitioners, particularly in areas such as educational placement, support services, and individualized planning processes. In this respect, examining the relationship between policy and practice may provide a broader understanding of how existing regulations address multiple disabilities.

Although the Special Education Services Regulation provides a general framework for special education practices, the extent to which it specifically addresses multiple disabilities remains insufficiently examined in the literature. In particular, limited attention has been given to how multiple disabilities are represented within policy documents in relation to inclusive education practices and support services. Therefore, this study focuses on examining how multiple disabilities are addressed within the Special Education Services Regulation from the perspective of inclusive education. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the Special Education Services Regulation from the perspective of multiple disabilities and to explore how this group is represented within the regulation.

In line with this aim, the study sought to answer the following research question:

1. How are multiple disabilities addressed within the Special Education Services Regulation in relation to inclusive education practices, support services, and individualization processes?

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study is a qualitative research aimed at examining the Special Education Services Regulation from the perspective of multiple disabilities. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth understanding of phenomena within their context and is particularly preferred in the analysis of complex structures. Accordingly, document analysis, one of the qualitative research methods, was employed in this study. Document analysis is a qualitative research method that involves the systematic examination and interpretation of documents in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009). It is widely used in the analysis of policy documents, regulations, and official texts (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). Within the scope of this study, document analysis was considered an appropriate method to reveal how the regulation, as an existing policy document, is structured in the context of multiple disabilities.

2.2. Data Source and Data Collection Process

The data source of the study consists of the current version of the Special Education Services Regulation published by the Ministry of National Education. In the analysis process, the version of the regulation enacted on July 7, 2018, was taken as the basis; however, subsequent amendments made in later years were also taken into account, and a comprehensive examination was conducted.

During the data collection process, the regulation text was examined in detail, and expressions related to multiple disabilities, inclusive education, educational settings, support services, and individualization processes

were identified. In this process, not only explicit statements but also provisions that could be indirectly associated with multiple disabilities were considered, and a comprehensive data set was constructed.

In order to ensure a systematic data collection process, the regulation was reviewed section by section. Provisions directly mentioning multiple disabilities, as well as provisions indirectly related to inclusive education, educational placement, support services, accessibility, and individualized education programs, were marked and recorded. During this process, attention was paid to both explicit terminology and broader policy expressions that could be associated with the educational needs of individuals with multiple disabilities.

2.3. Data Analysis Process

During the analysis process, the regulation text was read repeatedly to gain a holistic understanding of its content. Relevant expressions were first identified and coded according to their relationship with multiple disabilities and inclusive education. The coding process focused particularly on how the regulation addressed definition, educational placement, support services, accessibility, and individualization. Similar codes were then compared and grouped under broader themes. The themes were reviewed repeatedly to ensure that they were consistent with the coded data and reflected the scope of the research question.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is an approach that enables the systematic identification of patterns of meaning (themes) within a given data set. The analysis process was carried out in four main stages:

1. Reading the regulation text holistically and identifying meaningful expressions,
2. Coding the identified expressions,
3. Grouping similar codes under themes,
4. Interpreting and making sense of the identified themes.

As a result of this process, five main themes were established: “definition of multiple disabilities,” “positioning within inclusive education,” “educational settings and placement,” “support services,” and “individualization processes.” These themes were analyzed to reveal the framework provided by the regulation in the context of multiple disabilities.

2.4. Validity, Reliability, and Ethics

To ensure the validity of the study, attention was paid to the fact that the regulation used as the data source is an official, current, and reliable document. In addition, the findings obtained during the analysis process were supported by direct excerpts from the text, and the relationship between interpretations and data was clearly demonstrated. Reporting the research process in detail contributed to the transparency of the study and enhanced the traceability of the findings.

To ensure reliability, consistency was maintained throughout the coding and theme development processes. The codes and themes were reviewed repeatedly by the researcher during different stages of the analysis, and necessary revisions were made to maintain coherence. In this way, efforts were made to enhance the replicability of the analysis process. Furthermore, in order to minimize the influence of researcher bias in the interpretation of the findings, a text-based analysis approach was adopted. For this purpose, the codes and themes were reviewed at different stages of the analysis, and necessary revisions were made to ensure consistency between the research question, coded expressions, and final themes.

This study was conducted in accordance with the principles of research and publication ethics. Since the study is based solely on the analysis of a publicly accessible official policy document and does not involve human participants, personal data, or biological materials, ethical approval was not required. Throughout the research process, the principles of scientific integrity, transparency, objectivity, and proper citation were strictly followed.

3. FINDINGS

In this study, the Special Education Services Regulation was examined from the perspective of multiple disabilities, and the findings obtained were systematically analyzed through thematic analysis. During the analysis process, the provisions in the regulation were evaluated not only in terms of explicit statements but also with regard to content that could be indirectly associated with multiple disabilities. The analysis revealed that provisions related to multiple disabilities were generally limited, indirect, and broadly framed within the regulation. While more detailed definitions and practice-oriented explanations were provided for specific disability categories such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, and autism spectrum disorder, a comprehensive framework specifically addressing multiple disabilities remained limited.

In this context, the data were coded in a way that would reveal meaningful patterns, and the findings were organized under five main themes by grouping similar content together. The following themes were identified through the analysis: (1) definition of multiple disabilities, (2) positioning within inclusive education, (3) educational settings and placement, (4) support services, and (5) individualization processes. These themes were examined in order to better understand how and to what extent the regulation addresses multiple disabilities within the context of inclusive education.

Table 1: *Thematic Analysis of the Special Education Services Regulation from the Perspective of Multiple Disabilities*

Theme	Status in the Regulation	Findings	Interpretation
Definition of multiple disabilities	No clear and comprehensive definition	Indirectly addressed as “more than one disability”	Conceptual ambiguity may lead to different interpretations in practice
Positioning within inclusive education	General principles of inclusive education are present	Limited adaptations specific to multiple disabilities	Inclusion may not be equally applicable to all groups
Educational settings and placement	Separate educational settings are emphasized	Emphasis on special education schools/classes	Uncertainty in transition to inclusive settings
Support services	General framework exists	Counseling and resource room support are mentioned	Lack of intensive, interdisciplinary support structure
Individualization processes	IEP is strongly emphasized	Defined as a fundamental tool for all individuals	Lack of adaptations specific to multiple disabilities

As shown in the table, the Special Education Services Regulation was examined under five themes within the context of multiple disabilities. For each theme, the current status in the regulation, the findings obtained, and their corresponding explanations are presented together. The themes include the definition of multiple disabilities, positioning within inclusive education, educational settings and placement, support services, and individualization processes.

3.1. Theme 1: Definition of Multiple Disabilities

First, when the way in which the concept of multiple disabilities is addressed in the regulation is examined, it is evident that there is no clear, comprehensive, and systematic definition of this concept. While detailed definitions and regulations are provided for different types of disabilities such as visual, hearing, intellectual disabilities, and autism spectrum disorder, the concept of multiple disabilities appears to be addressed in a limited and indirect manner, mostly through the expression “individuals with more than one disability.”

This situation suggests that multiple disabilities are defined merely in terms of the numerical co-occurrence of disabilities, whereas the specific and complex needs arising from the interaction of these disabilities are not sufficiently taken into account. This conceptual limitation leads to the absence of a clear framework regarding how multiple disabilities should be addressed in terms of educational planning, the structuring of support services, and individualization processes. Therefore, the indirect and general expressions found in the regulation create a space open to varying interpretations among practitioners and may hinder the standardization of practices in the field. This can be considered a significant source of uncertainty, particularly in the process of accurately identifying the needs of individuals with multiple disabilities and developing appropriate educational arrangements to meet those needs.

3.2. Theme 2: Positioning Within Inclusive Education

An examination conducted within the context of inclusive education indicates that the regulation generally adopts an approach that promotes mainstreaming/integration practices and supports the participation of all individuals in educational settings. The general principles outlined in the regulation reflect an inclusive perspective grounded in the idea that individuals with special educational needs should be educated alongside their peers. However, it is noteworthy that the regulation does not provide a clear, detailed, and guiding framework regarding how this approach should be operationalized for individuals with multiple disabilities.

Considering the complex needs that arise from the interaction of multiple disabilities, there is a clear need for more concrete regulations addressing issues such as the types of adaptations required in inclusive educational settings, the support services to be provided, and the structuring of instructional processes. Nevertheless, the regulation appears to address these needs only through general statements, which may lead to ambiguity for practitioners and result in inconsistencies in the implementation of inclusive education principles in practice. This situation raises concerns about whether inclusive education is equally accessible and applicable for all groups and renders the adequacy of existing regulations particularly debatable for individuals with multiple disabilities, who require more intensive and multidimensional support (Dell’Anna et al., 2022). Therefore, beyond the mere inclusion of inclusive education principles in policy documents, how these principles are concretized for different groups with diverse needs and translated into practice emerges as a critical area for evaluation.

3.3. Theme 3: Educational Settings and Placement

An examination of findings related to educational settings and placement processes reveals that segregated educational environments are predominantly emphasized for individuals with multiple disabilities. The regulation notably prioritizes provisions directing these individuals toward special education schools or special education classrooms. This approach may be interpreted as an effort to address the intensive and multidimensional support needs of individuals with multiple disabilities. Indeed, arrangements such as maintaining low class sizes, providing greater opportunities for individualized instruction, and implementing multi-grade classroom practices aim to respond more effectively to the specific needs of these individuals.

However, the predominance of such arrangements within segregated settings also raises concerns from the perspective of inclusive education principles. In particular, the limited presence of concrete and detailed guidelines specific to multiple disabilities within mainstreaming/inclusion practices creates uncertainties regarding how these individuals should be supported in general education settings. This situation may lead to variability in practice concerning access to inclusive environments for individuals with multiple disabilities and result in placement decisions being shaped largely by institutional capacities rather than individual needs. Therefore, while existing regulations aim to address individual needs, the extent to which they align with the principles of inclusive education emerges as a critical issue requiring further examination (Wicki et al., 2025).

3.4. Theme 4: Support Services

An examination of support services indicates that the regulation addresses these services within a general framework. The inclusion of guidance and counselling services for individuals, families, and teachers, as well as the provision of resource room practices, suggests that the educational processes of individuals with special educational needs are not limited solely to classroom instruction. In this respect, the regulation reflects an approach that acknowledges the importance of supportive components within the educational process.

However, considering the complex and multidimensional needs of individuals with multiple disabilities, the existing provisions appear insufficiently detailed and directive in addressing these needs. In particular, the regulation provides limited clarity regarding the systematic and integrated delivery of services frequently required in the education of these individuals, such as physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, psychological support, and specialized educational services. Furthermore, in cases of multiple disabilities that necessitate coordinated efforts among professionals from different areas of expertise, the absence of detailed guidelines on how services should be planned, who should be responsible for their implementation, and how inter-institutional collaboration should be ensured may lead to ambiguities in practice. This situation can be considered a significant limitation in terms of the continuity, scope, and effectiveness of support services. Therefore, rather than being defined solely within a general framework, support services need to be structured in a more comprehensive and holistic manner that takes into account the specific needs associated with multiple disabilities.

3.5. Theme 5: Individualization Processes

As a final theme, it is noteworthy that the regulation places a relatively strong emphasis on individualization processes. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is defined as a fundamental planning tool for all individuals with special educational needs, and it is stipulated that the educational process should be carried out in accordance with this program. In this respect, the regulation clearly underscores the importance of considering individual differences and structuring educational processes in a way that is tailored to the individual.

However, when addressing the educational needs of individuals with multiple disabilities, it becomes evident that more detailed and directive provisions are required to translate this general framework into practice. In particular, the complex learning and developmental needs arising from the interaction of multiple disabilities necessitate that the content of the IEP be structured in a more flexible, holistic, and interdisciplinary manner. Despite this need, the regulation appears to provide limited concrete and practice-oriented guidance on how the IEP should be differentiated for this group, which areas should be prioritized, or which instructional strategies should be employed. As a result, although the principle of individualization is strongly emphasized at the theoretical level, it may remain confined to a general framework in practice. Therefore, enhancing the functionality of the IEP for individuals with multiple disabilities seems possible only through the provision of clearer and more detailed guidance on how this process should be structured.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed to reveal a relatively underrepresented area in special education policies by examining the Special Education Services Regulation from the perspective of multiple disabilities. The findings indicate that, while the regulation generally provides a comprehensive framework for special education services, provisions related to multiple disabilities remain limited and indirect. In this respect, the study draws attention to whether inclusive education policies equally encompass all groups and questions how individuals with complex needs are

positioned within policy documents (Dada et al., 2023; Giangreco, 2020; Hernández-Saca et al., 2023; Nind & Strnadová, 2020). In this context, the study is significant in that it makes potential gaps between policy and practice more visible (Wicki et al., 2025). From the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, these findings may suggest that policy-level regulations operating at the macrosystem level indirectly shape how educational experiences and support structures are organized across different educational environments. In particular, ambiguities related to support services, placement decisions, and individualized planning may influence interactions occurring at school and practitioner levels. This situation highlights the importance of stronger alignment between policy structures and implementation processes within inclusive education practices.

Regarding the definition and positioning of multiple disabilities within the regulation, the findings reveal that there is no explicit and comprehensive definition of multiple disabilities in the regulation. While different types of disabilities are defined in detail, multiple disabilities are addressed only in a limited manner through the expression "individuals with more than one disability." This situation indicates that multiple disabilities are not conceptually addressed within a clear framework and are rather considered within the broader category of special education. Such an approach may lead to differences in interpretation among practitioners and may also result in the specific needs of this group being overlooked. Therefore, it can be argued that the positioning of multiple disabilities within the regulation is not structured in a clear and systematic manner. From an ecological perspective, the absence of a clearer conceptual framework at the policy level may also affect how support systems are interpreted and implemented across educational settings. This may contribute to differences in educational planning and service delivery practices for individuals with multiple disabilities.

Another important finding concerns the way educational settings, support services, and individualization processes are addressed within the regulation. The findings indicate that the regulation primarily provides a general framework regarding educational settings, support services, and individualization processes for individuals with multiple disabilities. While special education schools and classrooms are emphasized more explicitly, guidance concerning inclusive educational environments remains relatively limited. Similarly, although support mechanisms for individuals, families, and teachers are mentioned, the regulation provides less detailed direction regarding interdisciplinary collaboration and individualized support practices. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is presented as an important component of the educational process; however, specific guidance related to its implementation for individuals with multiple disabilities appears to remain limited. Overall, these findings suggest that the regulation reflects an inclusive perspective at the theoretical level, while practical implementation details are addressed in a more general manner (Ainscow, 2020; Hernández-Saca et al., 2023; Mahlaule et al., 2024). These findings may indicate that the presence of inclusive education principles within policy documents does not necessarily ensure equally detailed implementation guidance for all groups with special educational needs. In this respect, the findings point to a possible gap between policy-level inclusion and practice-oriented educational arrangements.

In terms of providing guidance for practice, the findings demonstrate that the regulation offers a general framework but remains limited in providing concrete and directive guidance for multiple disabilities. While the provisions in the regulation set forth general principles regarding the organization of educational settings, the provision of support services, and the implementation of individualization processes, they do not include sufficiently detailed explanations on how these principles should be applied to individuals with multiple disabilities. This situation may lead practitioners to develop interpretations based on their own experiences and existing conditions in their decision-making processes, resulting in variations in practice (Ahereza, 2026; Bourke et al., 2026; Liasidou, 2012; Mendoza & Heymann, 2024). In particular, the absence of clear guidelines on how to structure the interdisciplinary collaboration, intensive support services, and individualized planning required by multiple disabilities can be considered a factor limiting the functionality of the regulation in practice. From a policy perspective, these ambiguities may increase practitioners' reliance on individual interpretation and institutional capacity during implementation processes. This may result in variability across educational settings and affect the consistency of support provided to individuals with multiple disabilities. Taken together, these findings suggest that the regulation provides a broad policy framework but offers limited practical guidance for addressing the complex educational needs of individuals with multiple disabilities.

From a theoretical perspective, the inclusive education approach is grounded in an understanding that prioritizes the active and meaningful participation of all individuals in educational processes, together with their differences (Ainscow, 2020). This approach requires not only ensuring access to education but also making arrangements that support individuals' effective engagement in learning processes. Ecological Systems Theory similarly emphasizes that educational experiences are shaped through interactions across interconnected systems, suggesting that limitations at the policy level may indirectly influence school practices, support services, and individualized educational processes. However, multiple disabilities emerge as one of the most complex and challenging areas of inclusive education practices, as individuals require simultaneous and intensive support across multiple domains. The interaction of difficulties experienced by individuals with multiple disabilities in areas such

as learning, communication, mobility, and adaptive skills necessitates the adoption of more flexible, holistic, and interdisciplinary approaches beyond standard inclusive practices (Hornby & Kauffman, 2024). Therefore, defining inclusive education solely at the level of general principles is not sufficient; it is essential to strengthen it through concrete arrangements specific to different groups of needs, clear implementation guidelines, and support mechanisms (Hernández-Saca et al., 2023; Wicki et al., 2025). The findings of this study similarly indicate that, while the current regulation adopts an inclusive education approach at the theoretical level, provisions regarding how this approach should be operationalized in the context of multiple disabilities remain limited. This situation clearly reveals the need for more detailed, systematic, and practice-oriented policy regulations in the planning and implementation of educational processes for individuals with multiple disabilities.

A review of the literature indicates that the challenges faced by individuals with multiple disabilities in educational processes are largely associated with insufficient support services, limited instructional adaptations, and inadequate interdisciplinary collaboration (Bigby et al., 2018; Maes et al., 2021). These findings demonstrate that multiple disabilities should be addressed not only at the individual level but also at systemic and structural levels (Kurth et al., 2016). In particular, the insufficient provision of intensive and multidimensional support structures required in the education of these individuals may directly affect the continuity and effectiveness of learning processes. Within this framework, the findings of the present study are largely consistent with the literature. The data obtained show that, although the regulation provides a general framework, it does not include detailed guidance addressing the specific and complex needs associated with multiple disabilities. As emphasized in the literature, standard special education practices are often insufficient for individuals with multiple disabilities; rather, their educational processes need to be addressed through more flexible, individualized, and interdisciplinary approaches. From this perspective, it can be argued that the general provisions included in the regulation may not be sufficient on their own to address the multidimensional challenges encountered in practice; therefore, more detailed and needs-based policy regulations are required. This situation once again highlights the necessity of strengthening the alignment between policy and practice. In this respect, the findings of the present study may contribute to the literature by illustrating how broader policy-related limitations become visible within the context of multiple disabilities. Rather than representing an isolated issue, multiple disabilities may reflect wider challenges associated with the implementation of inclusive education policies.

In conclusion, this study reveals that the Special Education Services Regulation contains limited and largely indirect provisions regarding multiple disabilities. While the regulation provides a comprehensive framework for the planning and implementation of general special education services and includes important principles for different disability groups, the inherently complex, multidimensional, and interrelated nature of the needs associated with multiple disabilities indicates a need for more detailed and targeted regulations in this area. In its current form, the provisions included in the regulation appear to be limited in addressing the specific needs encountered by individuals with multiple disabilities in their educational processes; in particular, they are not sufficiently developed in terms of clear and systematic guidance for practice. This situation suggests that there may be a certain misalignment between the goal of inclusive education policies to encompass all individuals equally and their implementation in practice (Ainscow, 2020; Evans & Lunt, 2002; Hernández-Saca et al., 2023; Kartiko et al., 2025). In other words, the inclusive approach adopted in policy documents does not appear to be equally reflected in practice, especially for groups requiring more intensive and multidimensional support. In this context, the development of clearer, more comprehensive, and practice-oriented policy regulations for multiple disabilities emerges as a critical necessity both for strengthening the alignment between policy and practice and for structuring the educational processes of these individuals in a more effective, consistent, and inclusive manner.

In line with these findings, it is first evident that there is a need to define the concept of multiple disabilities at the policy level in a clear, comprehensive, and functional manner. Such a definition should go beyond merely indicating the coexistence of multiple disabilities and should also encompass the specific needs arising from the interaction of these disabilities. In addition, addressing provisions specific to multiple disabilities under a distinct and holistic section within the regulation would contribute to meeting the educational needs of this group in a more visible and systematic way. At the level of practice, the development of concrete, clear, and applicable guidelines for teachers and other practitioners stands out as an important necessity. In particular, it is essential to strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration required in the education of individuals with multiple disabilities, to promote models that enable coordinated work among professionals from different fields of expertise, and to expand the scope of support services. In this regard, it becomes important to restructure educational environments not only to support academic learning but also to include supports related to communication, mobility, self-care, and social participation. Furthermore, inclusive education practices should be reconsidered in a way that also encompasses the needs of individuals with multiple disabilities, and practice-based research in this area should be increased. Such studies would both provide data for policy development processes and contribute to addressing the challenges encountered in practice. Ultimately, the implementation of these proposed arrangements would make a significant contribution to structuring the educational processes of individuals with multiple disabilities in a more inclusive, accessible, and effective manner.

This study is limited to the analysis of a single policy document and does not include practitioner experiences or implementation-based data. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the scope of the Special Education Services Regulation and may not fully reflect how the provisions of the regulation are implemented in different educational settings. In addition, the study focuses specifically on the policy-level representation of multiple disabilities and does not examine the perspectives of teachers, families, school administrators, or other stakeholders involved in practice. Future research may contribute to the field by investigating how the provisions of the regulation are interpreted and applied across different educational contexts and by incorporating the experiences of practitioners and individuals with special educational needs into the analysis process.

Author Contributions and Conflict of Interest Statement

The author conducted all stages of the study, including conceptualization, literature review, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, writing, and revision of the manuscript. The author approved the final version of the manuscript and assumes full responsibility for its content. The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Statement and Ethics Committee Approval

This study was conducted in accordance with the principles of research and publication ethics. Since the study was based solely on the analysis of a publicly accessible official policy document and did not involve human participants, personal data, or biological materials, ethical approval was not required. Throughout the research process, the principles of scientific integrity, transparency, objectivity, and proper citation were strictly observed.

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