

Views of Elementary School Teachers Regarding to Inclusive Education

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ABSTRACT

Despite special classrooms and educational programs being developed for special needs students in the 19th century, it is now believed that the inclusion of special needs students with mainstream students is the more effective option. The aim of this study was to examine the views of elementary school teachers about inclusive education. Data was collected through interviews and the data analyzed using the content analysis method. Five teachers from a state school in Gaziantep, Turkey, participated in the study. It was found that when families were interested in special needs students, their teachers also shared that interest. The study also found that parents and teachers lacked detailed knowledge about inclusion, as well as measurement and evaluation not being satisfactorily conducted.

Key Words: Special education, Inclusion, Students with special needs

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INTRODUCTION

Today, the number of students requiring special needs education is increasing day by day, making special education even more important. Special education offers significant contributions to the integration of individuals in need of special education, in the development of their self-direction, in addressing their needs, and in their reaching the same level as other individuals in society. These contributions help those in need of special education take their place in society. In terms of inclusion, every student has the right to receive education at fair rates (Salend, 2001). Inclusive education is a process that ensures the educative and psychosocial development of all students. Thus, individuals who receive special needs education increase their self-confidence and become collective beneficiaries. Baykoç (2015) put forward the most comprehensive definition of special education as follows:

Special Education is a program that differs from normal development due to its physical, mental, communicative, social and emotional development characteristics and it is also an education for the individuals that do not benefit or that partially benefit from normal education, or that can continue to receive education programs with support programs with the help of special training courses given by specially trained staff with special methods and tools, if necessary, special trainings given in special programs developed specifically for each special needs group even if they benefit from normal education program. (p. 5)

Avramidis and Norwich (2002) stated that teachers' perceptions are important to the successful implementation of inclusive education. Furthermore, Cross, Traub, Hutter-Pishgahi, and Shelton (2004) pointed out that one of the important conditions needed for successful inclusion of children with special education needs is the positive perspective of school staff members who work with these children. On the other hand, the negative perspective of these professionals could be a primary factor that impedes the process of inclusion of children with special education needs in regular classrooms.

Towards the end of the 19th century, special classes and special education programs developed for individuals with special needs were regarded as a major revolution at first, but it was later understood that such practices worked towards isolating those with disabilities from society (Metin, 2015). For inclusive education to be successful, it is seemingly undeniable that individual differences should be taken into consideration. However, reaching all students in classroom environments including student groups of increasing diversity makes this situation one of the most important challenges for today's teachers (Van de Walle, Karp, & Bay-Williams, 2012). When this fact is realized, the idea that those with disabilities should live with other people in society has become more important in terms of the social, cognitive, and psychological development of the individuals, and the foundations of integration programs have been laid. Inclusion is defined as "educational program appropriate for normal children with individual support in the curriculum and program process, which is regulated by the responsibility of normal education and special education personnel including educational and social cohesion of children with disabilities" (Metin, 2015). In another study, inclusion was defined as the training of individuals with special needs in relation to their disability with their peers at regular schools, with the views of their parents in order to improve their skills and to raise their skills to a higher level (Sarı, 2002, p. 5). The aim of inclusive education is to bring together individuals who are developmentally adequate with developmentally inadequate individuals, and to help them

develop alongside each other in the same classroom environment. Inclusion facilitates the integration of inadequate individuals with society. Individuals with inadequacy are able to find opportunities to develop themselves in terms of their physical, affective, cognitive, psychomotor, and social skills. Through integration, inadequate and non-disabled individuals are also able to communicate better. As emphasized by Sarı (2002), there are three types of inclusion according to legal regulations.

Regional inclusion: Special units can be placed within mainstream schools and private schools to provide inclusive education by sharing the same area.

Social inclusion: Through special classes and units, special needs children are encouraged to attend classes with children at a mainstream school, and are also motivated to eat meals, play in the dining hall or social areas, and even participate in class or out-of-school activities together.

Functional inclusion: These are where children with special needs are able to fulfill regional and social cohesion as well as cooperate with or coexist alongside other children in educational programs.

By applying these three types of integration, it is aimed to educate inclusive students in the best way to afford them a sense of collectivity. There is a considerable responsibility leveled at classroom teachers in practicing inclusion and training inclusive students. These classroom teacher tasks can be listed as (Sarı, 2002, p. 79):

- a) Identification of a child's special education needs and consulting with the child and their family about those needs;
- b) Informing the special education or guidance teacher regarding the special education of the child;
- c) Gathering information about the child and sharing it with other responsible teachers;
- d) Taking time to deal with the integration of the child individually;
- e) Preparing new practices by following the progress of the child;
- f) Maintaining knowledge of the legal regulations about special education, and following any new regulations;
- g) Making observations not only to recognize the child's obstacles, but also to reveal their strengths;
- h) Keep records of the child's work by making sure that inclusive students can follow the program;
- i) Ensuring special education teachers cooperate with other colleagues and also the parents of inclusive students;
- j) Undertaking various activities and applications for the integration of inclusive students with other students;
- k) In order to meet the interests and needs of inclusive students, they prepare and put into practice an individualized educational plan.

Inclusion in Turkey; education is provided for those with visual impairments, hearing impairments, orthopedic disabilities, mental retardation, persistent illnesses, difficulty with adaptation, and language and speech problems in seven separate groups of schools and institutions (T.C. Başbakanlık Özürlüler İdaresi Başkanlığı [Turkish Prime Ministry Administration for the Disabled], 1999). Individuals grouped with these types of disabilities have different characteristics. While the disabilities of some are immediately noticeable from

their physical appearance, from the devices they use, or from their exhibited behaviors, others may not be. Some individuals' deficiencies may be considered mild and not needing much in the way of support in the classroom environment, whilst some individuals have certain inadequacies and regulations may be needed due to the level of support required in the classroom and general school environment. Despite these different qualities, these individuals have the right to receive a good education in their general education classes alongside their peers through the arrangement of certain programs through legal regulation (Sucuoğlu, & Kargın, 2006, p. 76). Individualized education plans are prepared for integrated students, and targets that the student must reach throughout the year are determined. An individualized education plan is prepared so as to organize the development of the inclusive student more programmatically, by taking into account their characteristics, abilities, interests, and needs with the objectives set and the available tools (Sarı, 2002, p. 51). The individualized education plan significantly contributes to the progress of the inclusive students' development. Thus, the achievement level of inclusive students increases to a higher level, such as those who have difficulties in speaking improve in their speaking, those who cannot express themselves do so better, and those who cannot communicate with their friends start to form better relationships with their friends.

Classroom teachers should prepare Individualized Education Plans according to each student's characteristics, condition, and achievements in order to be successful. In addition, classroom teachers should prepare mainstream classroom students for the concept of inclusion so that inclusive students can be accepted by their peers. Many students will meet a person who needs special education for the first time in the classroom environment, if they have not previously met anyone needing special education in their family or neighborhood; therefore, existing mainstream students may have little or no prior knowledge about inclusive students. Thus, before inclusive students are placed into the mainstream classroom, teachers should inform the mainstream classroom students about their new peer/s by planning various activities, providing information about this topic or by making visits to private schools and classes. The aim being to ensure that mainstream students are aware of the problems faced by and the abilities of inclusive students. In this way, the integration process of inclusive students and mainstream students will more likely be successful (Ataman, 2003, p. 74).

The acceptance of children that need special education by their peers is very important in terms of the development of their understanding, communication, and social skills. This is not just for the development of the child, but also for their happiness and to be creative individuals. It is also important to ensure the integration of children who need special education and to help mainstream students learn (Sarı, 2002, p. 26). Assigning mainstream students to inclusive students in various ways once integrated into classes makes it easier for the teacher to work, as well as making them a part of the integration process (Batu, 2000, p. 83). At the same time, the attitude of the teacher towards inclusive students can also affect the behavior of mainstream students towards inclusive students. Thus, the teacher should pay attention to their own behaviors as a role model for all students. For inclusive education, students in the classroom environment obtain several acquisitions from their peers and school environment, and thereby exhibit progress in terms of their development (Lindsay, 2003). The process which also requires the employment of different teaching methods and techniques in the classroom make sure that students benefit from it (Lewis, & Doorkagi, 1999).

It is necessary to include families in the process in order to achieve success in integration (Republic of Turkey, Law Decree 573). According to the Law, it is stated that if the parents are not included in the integration process, success will not be able to be achieved for the inclusive students in terms of their development (Sarı, 2002, p. 133). Inclusion advocates the idea that the family should be at the fore of decisions about the child because they fully recognize the child's development, all their qualities and what the child is able to do at home. Therefore, the family should be informed about any decisions to be made about the child and they should be included in the study regarding what needs to be done at home and at school (Karatepe, 1992, p. 102).

Classroom teachers may receive information from special education teachers, guidance teachers, and school administrators, as well as from a mobile teacher where necessary, regarding a child's inclusion. The mobile teacher provides services to teachers and the school staff of disabled children at certain schools located within a region (Aral, & Gürsoy, 2009, p. 310).

It is also important to provide tools and equipment for integration applications. Even in special education, it may be necessary to utilize special tools for many groups with disabilities. Education of the visually impaired without equipment such as Braille tablets and typewriters, white cane Taylor crib etc., and the education of hearing impaired without individual table type and group hearing instruments is not feasible. Other disability groups also require certain tools and equipment; therefore, it is necessary to provide, protect, and maintain such equipment in good condition under the responsibility of the school administration (Özsoy, Özyürek, & Eripek, 2002, p. 239).

There are some who believe there are considerable deficiencies while applying inclusion practices in schools. For example, in the research conducted by Saraç and Çolak (2012), it was determined that requests made by primary school teachers were ignored in the inclusion practices within primary schools, that inclusion practices were carried out in inappropriate physical conditions, and that the help provided to the classroom teachers by the school staff was insufficient and not functional. In the study of Cankaya and Korkmaz (2012), the major problems faced by teachers in practice were reported as large classes, having more than one inclusive student in the class, and inadequate educational materials. Kaya (2003) determined that school administrators, class teachers, and guidance teachers had insufficient knowledge about integration, did not exhibit positive attitudes towards integration, and did not include work such as placement, educational evaluation, preparation of individualized education programs, or the provision of support services.

The purpose of the current research is to understand to what extent classroom teachers in Turkey have information about inclusive students, the problems they encounter, and to put forward solution suggestions with a holistic approach. For this purpose, the following research questions were identified:

- To what extent do teachers recognize the inclusive students?
- What kinds of problems do teachers have with their inclusive students?
- What kind of solutions do the teachers recommend to the problems they experience with their inclusive students?

METHOD

Research Model

The research was conducted using qualitative research method. Research data were gathered in the form of interviews with teachers. Five questions were asked in total, with two about participant demographics. The three other questions were about the teachers' knowledge about inclusive students, those students' problems, and their suggestions for solutions. The research was conducted with five primary school teachers with inclusive students in their classes in a primary school located in the city center of Gaziantep, Turkey. For this purpose, this research is conducted as a case study. The most important feature of qualitative case studies is the in-depth investigation of several situations. In other words, the factors related to a situation (environment, individual, events, processes, etc.) are investigated by a holistic approach, with a focus on how they affect the situation and how they are affected by the situation (Creswell, & Clark, 2007). In this study, it was attempted to reveal the views of teachers who have inclusive students in their class regarding the situation in their school.

Study Group

The study group of the research is composed of five classroom teachers working in a state primary school in the provincial center of Gaziantep, Turkey; therefore, convenience sampling was used in the study. The number of inclusive students in the primary school in which the study was conducted played an important role in selecting the research group.

Data Collection

In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted for the collection of qualitative data. Interview questions were examined by two educational scientists in order to determine the consistency of the questions with the research problem. The experts determined that the desired goal of the research could be reached with the proposed research questions. During the interviews, in the case where there were questions that teachers did not understand, additional explanation was carefully made so as not to guide them. During the analysis of the interview data, each teacher's responses were coded using a pseudonym. In order to conduct the interviews, the guidance teacher of the school was asked to determine the date and time of vacant courses of the teachers in advance. Taking the necessary permissions, interviews were conducted with the teachers on the specified dates and times. The interviews were audio recorded and the recordings numbered according to the interview sequence. At the start of the interviews, the researcher stated that the interviews were to be conducted in order to determine the problems they faced prior to the interview, and emphasized the importance to the quality of the research of their opinions given without hesitation when suggesting solutions to these problems. It was stated that the interviews would be audio recorded and that the recordings would only be listened to by the researcher. During the interviews, the teachers were asked semi-structured questions, including their demographic information.

Data Analysis

The data of the research was analyzed by content analysis technique. After the interviews were completed, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. While the interview transcripts were being written, the conversations were written as heard (verbatim)

in the order of interviewer-interviewee without any corrections. The information contained in the data was then systematically coded. The main purpose was to arrive at the concepts and associations that explained the collected data. In doing this, similar data were gathered together under specific themes.

FINDINGS

The findings of the research are presented and interpreted under subheadings according to the three research questions. Prior to the three main questions, the interviewee teachers were asked whether or not they had taken special education for inclusion courses in their pre-service training. Five teachers stated that they had not taken courses for inclusion/special education. Only one of the participants had received any in-service training on special education-inclusion. When the teachers were asked where they received their information about inclusion, they stated the Internet first off and then from the school guidance service. One of the participants said that he did not know whether or not there was a book related to the topic.

Teachers' knowledge about inclusive students

From the data analysis, it was seen that all of the teachers had knowledge about the literacy, general situation, and family situation of their inclusive students. For example, two of the teachers stated that they experienced language-related problems with their students as the students could not express themselves well (T3, T1). T4 stated that there were four inclusive students in his/her class; two of whom were hyperactive and the other two were introverted. T3 stated that there were two inclusive students in his/her class, and that one of them was too aggressive whilst the other was too introverted. T5 gave academic information about his student and expressed it as follows, "The child can read two-digit numbers and do simple additions." T2 stated that there were two inclusive students in his/her class, one of whom had mild mentally retardation and the other had a hearing impairment.

Table 1. *Characteristics of inclusive students*

Characteristic	Frequency
Mental retardation	1
Aggressiveness	1
Unable to express themselves	2
Unable to establish relationships with friends	1
Introversion	3
Late starting to speak	1
Speech problems	1
Hyperactivity	2

As can be seen in Table 1, the teachers stated the prominent characteristics of their inclusive students based on their observations. These features were mostly deficiencies in cognitive and affective domains. Psychomotor deficiencies were not mentioned. For example,

My student, who is mentally disabled, is not good in the social field, he is not good at his relations with his friends, he cannot express himself, and he is behind in his lessons. I mean, I have more expression problems with such students. (T1)

T2 stated that the family of his inclusive student, about whom he had significant knowledge, was in constant contact with him. Students' families about whom the teacher had little information was considered very uncommon at the school. It can therefore be said that the family also has a role in ensuring the teacher has adequate information about the inclusive student.

Families of inclusive students

The participants stated that the families of the inclusive students were socioeconomically poor, that their education levels were low, and that they were unconcerned about the education of their children. T3 expressed his opinion as follows. "Families generally have low financial and budget status, and their education levels are low primary school graduates. They are not parents said to help develop the education level of the learners." Some of the features of the inclusive students' parents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Characteristics of inclusive students' families*

Characteristic	Frequency
Father with mental health problems	1
Sibling with mental health problems	1
Parents with disabilities	1
Poor financial circumstances	3
Family unable to accept the situation	1
Family seem indifferent	1

As can be seen in Table 2, there are some economic and psychological problems faced by the inclusive students' families. For example, one of the participant teachers reported that their student's family had a problem of acceptance, and that they did not listen or do what he said (T4). T2 stated that "The father of the student was working with scrap and that he made his son do the same work, so the child had issues with absenteeism due to working." Another participant teacher (T1) stated that the father of the student experienced psychological distress from schizophrenia, and that the student's sibling (sister) had psychological problems. T3 said that the family seemed indifferent, and that they did not buy or let the student use the medicine that the doctor prescribed. T4 said that the family did not accept the situation of the child, stating the following:

Generally, the family does not accept the situation of the child much. I'm teaching Grade 3. The family took the child out of school this year, but it was reported that the child should receive 50% inclusive education. The families are generally indifferent and have problems of acceptance. They do not help teachers about it in this regard. They do not apply or listen very much to what is being said.

Problems teachers experience with inclusive students

The participants were asked about the problems they encountered during inclusion. Table 3 presents the characteristics and frequencies of their responses.

Table 3. Problems encountered by teachers with inclusion

Characteristic	Frequency
Communication problems with peers	5
Overcrowded classrooms	4
Measurement-evaluation problems	4
Communication problems with student's family	3
Time allocation for the student	2
Loneliness or isolation of the student	2

All of the teachers said that they experienced problems with student peer relations. Four of the teachers stated that they had problems that stemmed from their inclusive students. They said that the inclusive students were very aggressive and jealous, or did not adapt to their friends by exhibiting introverted or isolated behaviors (T1, T2, T3, and T4). One of the teachers stated that the problem resulted from the other students trying to stay away from the inclusive student (T5). Another problem is that the classes are overcrowded and the teacher is not very interested in the inclusive student. Four of the participants (T1, T2, T3, and T5) expressed the need to reduce the classroom overcrowding for inclusive students, stating the following:

The biggest problem we have with inclusive students is that we do not spend enough time with them, we have 33 students, two of whom are inclusive students. Our biggest problem is time. For example, I cannot show enough interest to them because of my crowded classroom. We usually give homework to them, and when we finish that homework, we give them more homework. We spend the time in that way. (T3)

Of course, it would be better to have fewer students in our classrooms. For example, I have 38 students in my class, so I am not able to spend as much time with them. In fact, we need to show more interest to them. But because of the number of students in the classrooms, we do not give enough attention to them. We need to do more individual work with them. (T1)

Another problem area that most teachers mentioned in addition to classroom overcrowding was measuring and evaluation. As the teachers experienced difficulty communicating with the inclusive students, they stated that they only apply lower-level measurements, that the students do not perform their duties and that the measurement-evaluation process takes a long time. For example T4 said;

I usually try to give a passing grade. We cannot evaluate them together with the other students. I am trying to go down to their level and to make evaluations by preparing activities appropriate to their level. It is tiring and time-consuming for the teacher.

Participant teacher T4 stated that he evaluates inclusive students at a lower level and that it is time-consuming. Another participant (T3) said,

We are not able to obtain the efficiency of measurement and evaluation in most of the studies that we give. The work done is forgotten. These students need to be interested in it

individually. We are not able to achieve academic success as much in the classroom environment because they are often unable to complete their work and it is not followed at home either, so we cannot make an assessment. Because the work is not finished, you cannot get anything from an incomplete work.

Therefore, he said that he often had difficulty in evaluating their homework and tasks because they were incomplete. Interviewee T1 also stated having difficulty in evaluating the child's writing because he could not read it most of the time.

After problems encountered in measurement and evaluation activities, the most common issues were family-related problems. Three of the teachers stated that the families did not come to the school for any co-work, and that they were indifferent to the education of their children (T3, T4, and T5). Two of the teachers stated that they experienced no problems with the families' support and that they were constantly in contact with them (T1 and T2). However, T4 expressed that the families do not believe in what their children do at school, saying; "I tell them about their behaviors in the classroom, but they say that their children do not do it. They do not care and remain uninterested as they do not want to believe it." Another participant (T1) talked of the indifference of the family to their child, stating; "They usually have poor living conditions and education levels, mostly they are primary school graduates. They also do not try to do anything for the improvement of their child's education." Similarly, T5 said that "When it comes to family support, they are not in good communication with the school. They are well-intentioned people, but we do not see that support when we want something from them."

On the other hand, both T1 and T2 stated that they were constantly in contact with the families and that they experienced no problems with them. T1 stated that the family was constantly calling and talking. In fact, it is a question of the crowdedness of the classes and has been examined separately here because of its significance. The participant coded T2 stated that he spent time with the inclusive students by engaging other students with homework and tried to explain the necessity that families should afford special time to such children: "When I assign homework to the other students, I spend time with the inclusive student." T3 stated the problem of spending time with the inclusive student as follows:

The biggest problem I have is time. For example, I cannot show enough interest to the inclusive students because of the crowded classroom. We usually give homework, and when they finish that homework, we give more homework again. We spend our time in that way.

Lastly, isolation-loneliness was reported as one of the problems faced by the teachers. Inclusive students often appear to be lonely and cannot fully integrate with the other students. For example participant T1 mentioned that:

I have a student called Fatma. She is not communicating with her other friends very much. She usually sits alone. Here I am saying to other children that they should take care of their friends and they should not leave them alone. However, she does nothing to communicate with her friends. The biggest problem they have is communication and inability to express them well.

The teacher tried to explain the loneliness and isolation of inclusive students from the perspective of their social environment.

Suggested solutions for teachers with inclusive students

Suggested solutions to the problems faced by the participant teachers with inclusive students were to increase the students' communication skills, reduce the number of students in the classrooms, make more appropriate evaluation of the students, increase familial support, and conduct social and mental activities that contribute to the students' awareness. The suggested solutions are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Suggested solutions to teachers' problems with inclusive students*

Characteristic	Frequency
Communication skills should be improved	4
Student numbers in classrooms should be reduced	3
Making appropriate assessment of students	3
Increasing familial support	2
Conducting social activities	2
Conducting mental activities that increase awareness	1

As can be seen in Table 4, the biggest problem faced by teachers with inclusive students in their classes relates to problems the students have in communicating with their friends and teachers. In order to resolve these issues, the participants coded T5 and T4 said that "We usually warn the other students that they should get along well with each other, be friends, to not break the hearts of one another and to tolerate them [inclusive students] even if they make mistakes." T3 expressed his thoughts as follows:

Social activities are needed to address the problems of [inclusive] children related to peer relations. Here we are trying to do in-class activities such as games apart from lessons. By creating groups we enable students to integrate with each other. We are also trying to make groups in physical education classes so that they can spend time with each other and understand and show respect to each other.

Participant T1 stated that he advised mainstream children to play with inclusive students and not to leave them alone. He also stated that;

What I do in my class is to tell children to take care of their friends, not to leave them alone, go out with their friends when they go out in the garden and let other students know not to leave such students alone.

Another problem regarding the inclusive students is that there are crowded classrooms and that the teacher cannot spend much time with inclusive students. In this regard the participant coded T3 suggested the following as a solution: "Now, first of all, as I have already mentioned, inclusive students have to be distributed equally and the number of students in the classrooms must be reduced as much as possible." Another participant (T2) suggested solving this problem by reassigning other students, and T4 stated that each class should not be given more than two inclusive students. Teachers experienced difficulties in making appropriate assessment of inclusive students; regarding this issue, participants coded T4 and T3 stated that they only simply evaluated such students and gave them assignments that they could manage. Participant T1 emphasized the need for in-service training as follows;

The Ministry of National Education could organize courses on this subject. They could better inform us about this. I mean, it would be better if education was given in this regard as we do not have much of an academic sense about it. It would be better if there were seminars and courses.

Familial support and awareness-raising activities were seen as important for the inclusive students as well. In this regard, the teachers indicated that the families of inclusive students could be trained under special education plans, and that success could be achieved with the help of the families and the school. For example, the participants coded as T3 and T4 supported that idea as follows;

The families generally do not have enough knowledge about these inclusive students. In this regard, they should be educated about this topic by means of seminars at schools. Most of the people regard inclusive students as insane or they think that they are problematic students, but they do not know that they can be educated. I think that kind of work could be done by the school guidance teachers by means of seminars. (T3)

Families should also be informed in the same way with the help of guidance teachers. They should be called to the school at certain times. Thus, the family accepts the child as he is and teaches him as it should be. (T4)

Similarly, T2 stated that families should spend more time with the children as follows;

I think the family has a more important place here, so there should be more time to share with these children, so cooperation with the teacher should be more. The lack in these children should be resolved in this way.

As the participant coded as T3 mentioned, they were engaged in social activities in physical education classes and outside of the class in order to integrate the students with each other.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this study, the teachers stated that they did not receive education in their preservice training on the area of student inclusion, and only one had received in-service training. However, since 1983, a course called Special Education has been given to teachers (Yükseköğretim Kurulu Başkanlığı [Turkish Council of Higher Education], 2007). On that course, one of the sections covered is inclusion. In this sense, the participants may have forgotten it or this section may have been omitted in their course. The teachers stated that they did research on the internet and took help from guidance services in their schools. In this regard, it is a significant result that the teachers did not have any books to support their professional development. It is necessary that teachers' awareness and specific activities should be obtained and formulated for further developing inclusive education, as pointed out by Shimizu (2012, p. 78), through "teacher organization with a vision of inclusive education". For such a purpose, it is clear that teachers should be able to achieve an appropriate conceptual understanding of inclusive education, as well as accurate knowledge, by being given the opportunity to undertake various types of teacher training. Teachers have general knowledge about their students, but they do not have in-depth knowledge. For example, the teachers did not mention about any special things they tried to do such as undertaking special research, special teaching methods, special materials, etc. for their

inclusive students. This may be due to the teachers not being interested in such students as much as their mainstream students or those they have received inadequate or no training in this area.

In the current study, the teachers attributed their inability to deal with inclusive students to overcrowded classrooms and the indifference of the inclusive students' families. Many studies have shown that teachers are not interested in inclusive students (Diken, & Sucuoğlu, 1999; Kargın, Acarlar, & Sucuoğlu, 2003; Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999). For example, Saraç and Çolak (2012) indicated that most teachers do not make special arrangements for their inclusive students. For this reason, Gök and Erbaş (2014) found the special education course taken in preservice training to be inadequate. Special education courses are given in faculties of education in Turkey for a period of two hours per week. However, it is perhaps more appropriate to give this course for two more semesters considering its intended purpose of practice. Teachers need to be provided with more courses and in-service training opportunities that focus on inclusion, as studies show those teachers having received more courses focusing on inclusion and having attended in-service training have more positive ideas towards inclusive education (Materechera, 2002; Subban, & Mahlo, 2017). After certain training activities, the qualifications of teachers on inclusive education as well as their self-confidence increases and they approach inclusive education more positively as a result (Harvey, & Greenway, 1984).

In addition, the lack of interest in the families of inclusive students leads teachers to not deal with the students. In the current study, the teachers stated that the parents of inclusive students were uneducated and that they also have problems themselves. According to one study, 11% of families claimed that inclusive students do not receive adequate education in schools (Kargın, Acarlar, & Sucuoğlu, 2003). Families blame the teachers and teachers blame the families. However, teachers will be better able to overcome their problems if they cooperate with the parents. When the parents participate in education and teaching activities, inclusive students show faster progress in their development (Bauer, Battle, & Johnson, 2004). Reviewing the literature and from the current study's teacher interviews shows that cooperation between the school administration, teachers, and parents are critical to the development process of students with disabilities and in raising them to the desired level of achievement. Therefore, in Turkey, it has been legally stipulated that the family should participate in the education of children that require special needs education. For this reason, it is important that both the teachers and the parents of inclusive students are kept informed about the subject by specialists in the field.

Spending time with the inclusive students and taking care of them is one of the most significant problems faced by teachers. This problem has been mentioned in many studies (e.g., Kargın, Acarlar, & Sucuoğlu, 2003; Saraç, & Çolak, 2012; Vural, 2008). In the current study, the primary reason for teachers not being able to spend time with inclusive students has been due to the overcrowding of classrooms, and also a fear of not catching up with the schedule on time. In this sense, the teachers stated that the number of mainstream students and inclusive students in each class should not be outside the limits specified in the regulations. It was also mentioned that inclusive students exhibit problems in their communication with their peers and teachers. Gök and Erbaş (2014) also mentioned communication problems with inclusive students. Increasing the communication skills of such students is the most important factor according to the current study research. While

such students need to be integrated and socialized in mainstream classes, they tend to lead an independent life. For this reason, the teachers also stated that the communication skills of such students should be increased. However, the students still have to do it for themselves. In order to increase the communication skills of inclusive students, collaborative activities could be arranged with families outside of the school environment.

Another important problem is the assessment and evaluation of inclusive students, which needs to be undertaken in a valid and reliable way. In many studies (e.g., Güven, 2009; Sanır, 2009; Saraç, & Çolak, 2012) as well as in the current study, teachers have stated that they could not properly measure or evaluate inclusive students. The teachers do not push these students in any way, but still make evaluations according to the general level of progress. When evaluations are performed according to an ITP (Individualized Education Program), it may be possible to provide teachers with training on the measurement and evaluation of inclusive students.

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TÜRKÇE GENİŞ ÖZET

Sınıf Öğretmenlerinin Kaynaştırma Uygulamalarına İlişkin Görüşlerinin İncelenmesi

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GİRİŞ

Günümüzde özel eğitime gereksinim duyan kişi sayısı her geçen gün artmaktadır. Bu durum özel eğitimi daha da önemli hale getirmektedir. Özel eğitim, özel eğitime gereksinim duyan bireylerin topluma uyum sağlamasında, kendini her yönden geliştirmesinde, gereksinimlerinin giderilmesinde ve toplumdaki diğer bireylerle aynı seviyeye gelmesi konusunda büyük katkılar sağlamaktadır. Bu katkılar özel eğitime ihtiyaç duyan bireyleri topluma kazandırmaktadır. Böylece özel eğitime ihtiyaç duyan bireylerin kendilerine olan güvenleri artmakta ve topluma faydalı bireyler olmaktadır. Baykoç (2015) özel eğitimin en kapsamlı tanımını şöyle yapmıştır: “ Özel Eğitim, fiziksel, zihinsel, iletişimsel, sosyal ve duygusal gelişimlerdeki özellikler nedeniyle normal gelişimden farklılık gösteren ve normal eğitim/öğretimden yararlanamayan, kısmen yararlanan veya yararlandığı halde destek programları ile eğitimlerini devam ettirebilen bireyler için; özel yetiştirilmiş elemanlar tarafından ekip anlayışıyla sunulan, özel yöntem ve araçlarla gerekirse özel mekanlarda her özel gereksinimli grup için farklı olarak geliştirilmiş özel programlarla verilen eğitimidir”.

Kaynaştırma, “normal eğitim ve özel eğitim personelinin sorumluluğunda düzenlenmiş eğitim programı ve program sürecinde bireysel destekleme ile birlikte normal çocuklara uygun engelli çocukların eğitimsel ve sosyal birleşimi” olarak tanımlanmaktadır (Metin, 2015). Başka bir çalışmada ise kaynaştırma özel eğitime gereksinim duyan bireylerin engel derecesine göre ortaya çıkan ihtiyaçların giderilmesini sağlamak ve yeteneklerini daha üst seviyeye çıkarmak için ailelerinin de görüşleri alınarak normal okullarda akranlarıyla birlikte eğitilmesidir (Sarı, 2002, s.5) şeklinde tanımlanmıştır. Kaynaştırma eğitiminin amacı, yetersizliği olan bireylerle yetersizliği olmayan bireyleri bir araya getirip aynı sınıf ortamında birbirlerine yardımcı olarak birbirlerini her yönden geliştirmelerini sağlamaktır.

Türkiye’de kaynaştırma; görme engelliler, işitme engelliler, ortopedik engelliler, zihinsel engelliler, süregen hastalığı olanlar, uyum güçlüğü olanlar, dil ve konuşma problemi olanlar, üstün ve özel yetenekliler, olmak üzere yedi ayrı gruba okul ve kurumlarda eğitim hizmeti verilmektedir (1. Özürlüler Şurası Raporu, 1999). Kaynaştırma öğrencileri için bireyselleştirilmiş eğitim planları hazırlanmaktadır ve öğrencinin yıl boyunca ulaşması gereken hedefler belirlenmektedir. Bireyselleştirilmiş eğitim planı, kaynaştırma öğrencisinin özellikleri, yetenekleri, ilgileri, ihtiyaçlarıyla yapılabildiği öngörülen hedefler, araç-gereçler dikkate alınarak gelişimini daha planlı programlı düzenlemek amacıyla hazırlanan plandır (Sarı, 2002, s.51). Kaynaştırma uygulamalarında sınıf öğretmeni; özel eğitim öğretmeninden,

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rehber öğretmenlerden ve yönetimden destek aldığı gibi gerektiği yerlerde gezici öğretmenlerden de yardım alabilir. Gezici öğretmen, bir bölgede bulunan birkaç okuldaki engelli çocukların öğretmenlerine, okul personeline ve engelli çocukların gelişimi için her yönden hizmet götüren kişidir (Aral ve Gürsoy, 2009, s.310).

YÖNTEM

Araştırma, nitel araştırma yöntemiyle gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma verileri öğretmenlerle görüşme yöntemiyle toplanmıştır. Beş öğretmene demografik soruların yanında üç soru sorulmuştur. Bu üç soru öğretmenlerin kaynaştırma öğrencileri hakkındaki bilgilerini, karşılaştıkları sorunları ve çözüm önerilerini ortaya çıkarmaya yönelik sorulardır. Bu araştırma Gaziantep şehir merkezinde bulunan bir ilkokulda sınıflarında en az 2 kaynaştırma öğrencisi bulunan beş (5) sınıf öğretmeni ile gerçekleştirilmiştir.

Bu araştırma verilerin toplanması, nitel veri toplama yöntemlerinden yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yöntemi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşme soruları iki eğitim bilimciye incelenilerek soruların araştırma problemi ile tutarlılığı belirlenmeye çalışılmıştır. İki eğitim bilim uzmanı bu sorularla araştırmada istenilen hedefe ulaşılacağını belirlemiştir. Görüşme sorularının sorulması sırasında öğretmenlerin herhangi bir soruyu anlamama ihtimaline karşı kendilerine yönlendirici olmayacak şekilde açıklamalar yapılmıştır. Verilerin analizi sırasında her öğretmene kod isim verilmiştir. Gerekli izinler alınarak belirlenen tarih ve saatlerde öğretmenlerle birebir yapılan görüşmeler ses kayıt cihazıyla kaydedilmiş ve görüşme sırasına göre ses kayıtlarına numara verilmiştir. Araştırmacı, her görüşme öncesinde görüşme yapacağı öğretmenlere kaynaştırma uygulamalarında karşılaştıkları sorunları ve bu sorunların çözümüne ilişkin görüşlerini belirlemek amacıyla bu görüşmelerin yapılacağını belirtmiş ve bu nedenle öğretmenlerin görüşlerini çok açık bir dille çekinmeden aktarmalarının araştırmanın niteliği ve araştırma için önemli olduğunu vurgulamıştır. Öğretmenlere görüşmelerin ses kayıt cihazıyla kaydedileceği ve kayıtların sadece araştırmacı tarafından dinleneceği belirtilmiştir. Görüşmeler esnasında öğretmenlere demografik bilgilerde dâhil olmak üzere sorular yöneltilmiştir.

Araştırmanın verileri içerik analizi tekniği ile çözümlenmiştir. Görüşmeler tamamlandıktan sonra, ses kayıtlarının yazıya döküm işlemine başlanmıştır. Görüşmelerin dökümü yapılırken her konuşma duyulduğu şekliyle, hiçbir düzeltme yapılmadan ve görüşmeci-görüşülen sırasıyla yapılmıştır. Bu çerçevede dökümü yapılan verilerin içindeki bilgiler sistematik olarak kodlanmıştır. Burada temel amaç toplanan verileri açıklayabilecek kavramlara ve ilişkilere ulaşmaktır. Bunun için birbirine benzeyen veriler belirli temalar çerçevesinde bir araya getirilmiştir.

BULGULAR TARTIŞMA VE SONUÇ

Bu araştırmada, bir öğretmen dışında diğerleri kaynaştırmaya yönelik hizmet öncesinde eğitim almadıklarını belirtmiştir. Ancak 1983 yılından itibaren özel eğitim adlı bir ders öğretmen yetiştiren kurumlarda verilmeye başlanmıştır (YÖK Öğretmen Kitabı, 2007). Bu dersin içerisinde bir bölüm de Kaynaştırma bölümüdür. Bu anlamda katılımcılar bunu unutmüş olabilir ya da o ders içerisinde bu bölüm atlanmış olabilir. Öğretmenler araştırmalarını İnternette ve okullarındaki rehberlik servisinden öğrendiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Bu konuyla ilgili olarak öğretmenlerin profesyonel gelişimleri için kitap alıp okumamaları önemli bir sonuçtur. Öğretmenler öğrencileri hakkında genel bilgi sahibidirler ancak derinlemesine bilgi sahibi değildirler. Örneğin kaynaştırma öğrencileri için özel bir

araştırma yapıp, özel öğretim yöntemleri, özel materyal üretme gibi şeylerden bahsetmemişlerdir. Bunun nedeni olarak öğretmenlerin bu tür öğrencileri ile ilgilenmemeleri ya da aldıkları yetersiz eğitim olabilir. Bu çalışmada öğretmenler kaynaştırma öğrencileriyle ilgilenmemelerini sınıf mevcudunun kalabalıklığına ve ailenin ilgilenmemesine bağlamışlardır. Birçok çalışmada öğretmenlerin kaynaştırma öğrencileriyle ilgilenmedikleri ortaya konulmuştur (McCormick, 1999; Diken ve Sucuoğlu, 1999; Kargın, Acarlar ve Sucuoğlu, 2003). Örneğin Saraç ve Çolak (2012) öğretmenlerin çoğunun kaynaştırma öğrencileri için özel bir düzenleme yapmadığını ifade etmektedir. Bunun nedeni olarak Gök ve Erbaş (2014) hizmet öncesinde alınan özel eğitim dersinin yetersiz olmasını bulmuşlardır. Özel eğitim öğretmen yetiştiren fakültelerde bir dönemde haftalık iki saat olarak verilmektedir. İçeriği geniş olan bu dersin aslında iki dönemde uygulamalı bir şekilde verilmesi daha uygun görülebilir.

Ayrıca ailenin de ilgilenmemesi öğretmenin de kaynaştırma öğrencisi ile ilgilenmemesine yol açmaktadır. Bu çalışmada öğretmenler ailelerin eğitimsiz olduğunu ve genellikle ailede sıkıntılar olduğunu belirtmektedirler. Ailelerin ise %11'i kaynaştırma öğrencilerinin okulda yeterli eğitim almadığını iddia etmektedirler (Kargın, Acarlar ve Sucuoğlu, 2003). Aileler öğretmenleri, öğretmenler de aileleri suçlamaktadırlar. Özel eğitim yönetmeliğinde ise ailenin kesinlikle özel gereksinimli çocuğun eğitimine katılması gerektiği kanunen belirtilmiştir. Bu nedenle hem öğretmenlerin hem de ailelerin bu işin uzmanları tarafından bilinçlendirilmeleri önemli görülebilir.

Kaynaştırma öğrencisine zaman ayırıp onunla ilgilenme öğretmenlerin karşılaştıkları en büyük sorunlardan birisidir. Birçok çalışmada bu sorun dile getirilmiştir (Vural, 2008; Saraç ve Çolak, 2012; Kargın, Acarlar ve Sucuoğlu, 2003). Zaman ayıramamanın en büyük nedeni olarak bu çalışmada sınıf kalabalıklığı ve programı zamanında yetiştirme korkusu olarak görülmüştür. Bu anlamda öğretmenler sınıf mevcutlarının ve kaynaştırma öğrenci sayılarının yönetmelikte belirlenen sayılar dışında olmaması gerektiğini ifade etmişlerdir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Özel eğitim, Kaynaştırma, Özel gereksinimli birey