

## From the Editor...

Dear Readers,

We are with you again with the Ankara University Faculty of Educational Sciences Journal of Special Education's first issue of March 2025, Volume 26, Issue 1. As always has been, I would like to thank here those who contributed as our authors, reviewers, readers, our Academic Advisory Board, and our Editorial Board. I would like to indicate that as the Editorial Board, we put forth the effort to move our journal to a higher level both quantitatively and qualitatively in the forthcoming process. Before introducing the articles in this issue, I would like to thank for his devoted work and contributions to our journal and wish success in his future works to Dr. Çetin TOPUZ from Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, who left our team as one of our Technical Executives as of this issue. I also would like to welcome Res. Assist. Elif SAN from Uşak University, who has joined us as Technical Executive in this issue, and wish her success in her work.

Dear Readers, I would like to share an update on the recent development in the journal. Since the number of articles awaiting in early publication has increased, we have decided to increase the number of articles in our journal from six to eight beginning with this issue, so we will be presenting you with eight articles in the four issues we will have published in 2025. I would like to thank you very much for your great interest in our journal and hope you continue your interest.

This issue of our journal features seven research articles and one review article. I would like to briefly introduce them to you. The first research article in the current issue includes a study of *Sultan ALZHRANI* titled "*The Reality of Common Sexual Problems for Students with Down's Syndrome in Saudi Arabia.*" The study aimed to identify the sexual problems of students with Down's syndrome in Saudi Arabia from the point of view of their parents and teachers in the light of a range of variables (student's age, educational program, and family's economic situation). This descriptive comparative study was based on a sample of 120 participants consisting of 68 parents and 52 teachers caring for students with Down's syndrome. The questionnaire of sexual problems for students with disabilities was applied and the data was statically analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and One-way ANOVA. The findings indicated that the most prevalent sexual problems experienced by students with Down's syndrome according to their parents and teachers are a lack of knowledge of sexual development, difficulties in the child presenting themselves in front of others, and the inability to distinguish between normal and abnormal physical contact. The arithmetic one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), mean, standard deviation, and t-test were used to calculate the findings that revealed no statistically significant differences between the perspectives of the parents and teachers of students with intellectual disability regarding the most prevalent sexual problems. Moreover, there was no statistically significant correlation between the student's age and the sexual problems they encountered. Finally, the findings found statistically significant differences in the sexual problems encountered according to the of the program variables to which the students with Down's syndrome belong and the family's economic situation. It is recommended that a group counseling program be devised for the parents of students with Down's syndrome to advance their knowledge of sexual development and to obtain an understanding of how to deal with the variables resulting from such development. Develop training programs for families, teachers, psychologists, and social workers working in special needs care on how to identify the sexual problems experienced by intellectually disabled students. Raise parents' awareness of the importance of communication and dialogue with teachers to identify the most important sexual problems their children face and collaborate to resolve them through training courses.

The second study namely "*Common Backgrounds of Students in the Field of Visual Arts at Science and Art Centers (SAC)*" was authored by *Asuman DAŞDEMİR*. This study aims to investigate the common backgrounds of artistically gifted and talented students in their immediate surroundings, including family and social environments. This research, utilizing qualitative research methodology, is designed as an embedded single-case study. The study involved 10 students, eight girls and two boys, who qualified for art education in the field of painting at the Science and Art Center (SAC) in İzmit, a support center for gifted and talented students, during the 2022-2023 academic year. Both students and their parents participated in the study. Data obtained through semi-structured interview questions were descriptively analyzed in alignment with the research questions. Four main themes emerged from the research, namely "Roles," "Approval," "Firsts," and "Differences." The study indicates that family plays a crucial role as the most critical component in the talent development and success of artistically gifted and talented students. The demographic structure of families and their attitudes toward art are considered significant factors in the artistic development of their gifted children. Discovering the talents of gifted and talented students, supporting them accurately, and utilizing their skills in appropriate fields would contribute to the national interest. Therefore, closely monitoring and discovering the interests of gifted children, along with providing support in those areas, are crucial factors in developing their talents.

The third research article in this issue is authored by *Murat Hikmet AÇIKGÖZ, Kürşat ÖĞÜLMÜŞ, and Sezgin VURAN*, entitled "*The Career Choice Reasons of Special Education Teacher Candidates.*" The aim of the study is to examine the reasons for the preference of pre-service teachers the special education department. In this study, phenomenology, one of the qualitative research models has been used. The participants of the study consisted of 182 first-year students of special education teacher training program studying in four different universities in the Black Sea and Central Anatolia regions. The data of the study were collected online through a data collection form created by the researchers. The data were analyzed with MAXQDA software. According to the findings, the students preferred the special education department for altruistic reasons, felt positive feelings towards the department, and set personal goals for their profession in the future. Most of the students did research before choosing the department and received information from people related to special education. It was concluded that the people who influenced the students to choose the department were mostly family members. Finally, most of the students stated that they found special education teaching suitable for their personalities. When the results of the research are evaluated in general, it is seen that special education teacher training program is mostly preferred for altruistic reasons and that the preferences are mostly researched and made consciously. This situation is thought to be important and promising in terms of students' future professional success.

*Mehmet Emin KALAYLI, Hatice Cansu BİLGİÇ, and Eylem DAYI* authored the fourth research article, entitled "*Investigating the Relationship Between Preservice Special Education Teachers' Attitudes Toward Professional Collaboration and Teaching Competencies.*". This study aimed to contribute to the literature by clarifying the relationship between attitudes towards collaborative working skills and teachers' competencies in the field of special education. The research was designed in relational survey method, one of the quantitative research types. A total of 253 students who were enrolled in the undergraduate special education program at the universities and took the teaching practice course for at least one semester participated in the study. The data of the study were collected through the "Attitude Scale towards Professional Collaboration among Teachers" and "Ohio Teacher Competence Scale". Before analyzing the data, the assumption of normality was checked. Then, statistical analyses (correlation, regression, one-way analysis of variance, independent groups t-test) were performed. Reliability coefficients were also calculated for each scale. As a result of the analyses, a high positive correlation was found between pre-service teachers' attitudes towards professional collaboration and teacher competencies and their subdimensions. In addition, it was found that pre-service teachers' attitudes toward professional collaboration positively predicted teacher competencies and their subdimensions. Finally, the attitudes towards collaboration and teacher competencies of pre-service teachers working with students with severe and multiple disabilities in teaching practice were higher than those of preservice teachers working with other disability groups. The results of this study suggest that pre-service special education teachers' positive attitudes towards professional collaboration significantly increase their levels of teacher efficacy, and that working with different disability groups affects pre-service teachers' professional development in different ways. This highlights the importance of teacher education programs to promote approaches that are sensitive to diversity and diverse learning needs.

The fifth research article, which was authored by *Hande ŞAHİN, Aygen ÇAKMAK, and Yurdagül ERDEM* is entitled "*Evaluation of the Family Burden and Social Isolation Status of Mothers of Children with Special Needs.*". This research was conducted as a descriptive study to determine the family burden and social isolation status of mothers of children with special needs and the influencing factors. The researchers conducted the present study on 180 Turkish mothers selected by convenience sampling and collected data using the "Information Form," "Social Isolation Scale," and "Family Burden Assessment Scale for Families of Children with Intellectual Disability." They performed data analysis using the program SPSS. The study, which examined the social isolation status and family burdens according to some demographic variables, calculated skewness and kurtosis values. Since the results showed that the distributions were within acceptable limits, the researchers used ANOVA and t-test analysis to compare the means and multiple regression analysis to determine the possible predictors of the total scores from the scales. The findings showed that respondent mothers had a moderate level of social isolation and a high level of family burden. With an increase in respondent mothers' age and education level, their social isolation levels decreased. Furthermore, with an increase in respondent mothers' education level, family burden decreased. However, with the increasing number of children with special needs respondent mothers had, their family burden increased. The family burden of respondent mothers who reported that having children with special needs caused them to experience problems with their social communication and spouses also increased. The impact of having a child with special needs on social communication and the number of children with special needs are discussed as the important predictors of both social isolation and family burden.

The sixth research article in this issue, entitled "*Improving Reading Comprehension and Fluency in an Intellectually Disabled Student: A Case Study,*" was authored by *Özgül GÜLER-BÜLBÜL*. This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of a series of interventions that combine skill and performance-based reading fluency techniques with reading comprehension techniques used during and after reading in improving reading fluency and comprehension skills of an intellectually disabled student. The uniqueness of this study is that it focuses on a

child with intellectual disability, and it combines fluent reading and reading comprehension techniques. This was a case study featuring a 13 year old male student enrolled in the sixth grade of a middle school who received interventions in a special education class for mild intellectual disability in Turkey. The intervention series was applied in ten sessions. As a result of the interventions, there was a decrease in the number of misread words and increase in the number of correctly read words and reading comprehension level compared to the baseline values. The student maintained the acquisitions he gained during the intervention and in the following weeks. In conclusion, the intervention package developed for an intellectual disability student was effective in improving and maintaining the student's reading fluency and reading comprehension skills. Further studies with larger samples are needed to test the generalizability of the results.

The seventh and the last research article, titled "*Program Literacy Status of Special Education Teachers*," was authored by *Hakan GÖL* and *Naif ERGÜN*. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between curriculum literacy, self-efficacy beliefs and curriculum commitment levels of special education teachers. In addition, the study also analyzed how teachers' curriculum literacy, self-efficacy beliefs and curriculum commitment levels change according to various demographic variables. In this study, the researchers used a descriptive-correlational research model. They obtained the research data using scales developed for this purpose. They collected data from 402 (female: 213, male: 189) special education teachers in different geographical regions of Turkey and analyzed it using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 26 data analysis program. The study found that special education teachers had good levels of curriculum literacy, self-efficacy beliefs, and commitment to the curriculum. The results showed that curriculum literacy and self-efficacy belief levels did not differ according to gender, while the level of commitment to the curriculum differed in favor of women. The findings indicated that the level of curriculum literacy and curriculum commitment did not differ according to educational status, while the level of self-efficacy beliefs differed in favor of teachers with graduate degrees. Program literacy, self-efficacy belief, and program commitment levels differed significantly according to the field of graduation. The analysis revealed that curriculum literacy, self-efficacy beliefs, and curriculum commitment levels were highly correlated with each other. Finally, the study determined that teacher self-efficacy beliefs and curriculum commitment levels were predictors of curriculum literacy. According to the findings, the authors concluded that special education teachers have high levels of curriculum literacy, curriculum commitment, and self-efficacy beliefs.

The last article in this issue is a review article, entitled "*Investigation of Graduate Theses on Classroom Teachers' Instructional Practices Related to Inclusion*," was authored by *Serap DEMİRBILEK*, *Muzaffer SENCER-ÖZSEZER*, and *Mesut DEMİRBILEK*. This study aims to examine the doctoral theses dealing with classroom teachers' instructional practices related to inclusion. The study used document analysis. A total of fifty-four postgraduate theses on classroom teachers' instructional practices related to inclusion, determined by criterion sampling, were subjected to analysis. When the results obtained in the research are examined, it is seen that the laws and regulations enacted and the postgraduate studies carried out are historically parallel. However, methodologically, it was seen that more quantitative analyses were conducted on classroom teachers' instructional practices related to inclusion. It was found that designs and models such as descriptive/general survey, relational design, and case study were used intensively, and in terms of sampling methods, simple random sampling, criterion sampling, purposive sampling, and maximum variation sampling methods came to the fore. Again, when the subjects/variables addressed by the theses and the tendencies of the theses were examined, it was seen that the teaching and classroom practices carried out by classroom teachers related to inclusion gained weight. In addition, it was determined that the topics of classroom management in inclusion, teacher competencies or qualifications, support for teachers in special education, and teacher attitudes also formed a trend in postgraduate research. As a result, it can be seen that a method based on describing the existing situation and problems is followed, and experimental research, suggestions, planning, and modeling for solving problems or effective inclusion practices are missing.

Dear Readers, in the presence of you I would like to kindly thank once again my colleagues for their vigorous efforts, who are working with me on the Editorial Board for our journal to be published timely and to increase its quality. I would like to thank our dear readers, authors, and reviewers for their support and contributions once again and I would like to offer my respects to kindly request you to continue your support and contributions during the ongoing process. I wish to be with you again in the second issue of the 26<sup>th</sup> volume which will be published in June 2025...

***Prof. Hatice BAKKALOĞLU***