

TEACHER'S OPINIONS ON THE EDUCATION OF INCLUSIVE STUDENTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the views of primary school teachers in the education process of inclusive students. The participants of the research were Şht. Mustafa Kurtuluş Primary School teachers. Our participant group of 10 consists of classroom teachers. Research data were collected by semi-structured interview technique, one of the qualitative research methods. The data obtained from the research were analyzed descriptively. As a result, considering the difficulties faced by classroom teachers in inclusion practices in primary schools, and the research findings in order to make mainstreaming education more successful, it can be suggested that all school personnel, especially classroom teachers, be conscious of mainstreaming practices and that sufficient resources and materials should be accessed for resource education. It shows that primary school teachers stated that students with special needs develop academically and socially during the inclusive education process, and that the inclusion practices that they want to be in the TRNC for students with special needs can be achieved with the participation of the families of the students with special needs and the cooperation with the guidance teacher and special education teacher. Classroom teachers support each other by exchanging ideas with other teachers the most. In inclusive education, a more successful inclusive education is considered when the difficulties experienced by classroom teachers in the support education service for students with special needs are minimized and the inclusive practices that are desired to be in the TRNC are realized.

Keywords: inclusive education, teachers' views, students with special needs.

Introduction

In Turkey, with the Special Education Services Regulation (2006), which was legalized with the Law No. 2916 on Children in Need of Special Education, which came into force in 1983, and the inclusive education practices, where good developments have been seen in Turkey and the TRNC for about 37 years, have been achieved in general education environments. It is said that there are educational practices that can be applied and accepted. This application covers education through mainstreaming, "For individuals in need of special education, formal and private support education services training together with their normally developing peers; Preschool, primary education, secondary education and non-formal education institutions are defined as "continuation principle and special education practices, and it is seen that support education services are emphasized in this definition. With the same information, Support Education Services are defined as "medical and educational evaluation and diagnosis applications of individuals in need of special education, expert personnel, equipment, training and consultancy services to their families, teachers and school personnel".

Common points in definitions; The education of individuals with special needs with their normally developing peers in general education environments is at the forefront of the special service training that these children and their teachers will need. Special needs education is one of the main aspects of education in general education classrooms (Akçamete, 2009).

In recent sources, it is frequently emphasized that inclusion should not only be for students with special needs but also for all students (Wood, 2002; Friend and Bursuck, 2006).

The success of mainstreaming practices depends on their ability to receive special education needs, the required special education and normal education services as needed. If these services are adequately explained, some conditions may be met (Kırcaali-Iftar and Batu 2007; Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, Bull, Cozier and Dempf-Aldrich, 2011).

Especially teachers have pre-needs regarding inclusion and readiness. In mainstreaming practices, the most responsibility falls on the classroom teacher. Teachers who will be teachers of the inclusive classroom, which is as important as preparing the teacher for inclusive education, should be willing and accepting special students during the mainstreaming phase (Salend and Garrick Duhaney, 1999; Kargin, 2006; Kırcaali-Iftar and Batu, 2007).

Classroom teachers have the opportunity to follow up with students with special needs and spend extended time with them. For this reason, teachers are the people who give the most healthy classroom information to the family, are a consultant or an expert for the student with special needs, and implement the regulations for the education of the student. For this reason, classroom teachers have an important role in inclusion practices (Friend & Bursuck, 2006; Diken, 2007).

There are many factors that can affect teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. These factors are; These factors include the age of the teacher, the level of the teaching class, the learning disability group with special needs, the degree of disability, professional seniority, inclusive education and the level of support from the teacher's school and support service program (Kırcaali-Iftar and Batu 2007; İmrak, 2009). In fusion applications; it is stated that students' special needs are not accepted by their peers, legal deficiencies are not eliminated, supervision is not appropriate, teachers cannot adapt their programs to mainstreaming students, and there are problems in evaluation and graduation (Sucuoğlu, 2004).

When inclusive education of classroom teachers is evaluated in general in the literature, it seems as if classroom teachers have negative opinions (Bilen, 2007; Önder, 2007; Rakap and Kaczmarek, 2010) and negative attitudes (Diken and Sucuoğlu, 1999; Avcıoğlu, Özbey and Eldeniz Çetin, 2005).

However, inclusive teachers do not receive support for inclusive education (Bilen, 2007; Önder, 2007) and they need support (Kwapy, 2004; Horne and Timmons, 2009). Classroom teachers' opinions and attitudes informative studies (Türkoğlu, 2007; Metin, Güleç and Şahin, 2009) and support education services (McLeskey, Waldron, So, Swanson and Loveland; 2001; McLeskey and Waldron, 2002) seems to be changing in a positive way.

In our country, the inability to provide support services to students and classroom teachers, which are special in inclusion practices, causes the entire burden to be left to classroom teachers. Such classroom teachers have difficulty in overcoming problems with their special students (Sucuoğlu and Kargin, 2008; Guzel Özmen, 2009). This situation has led classroom teachers to think a little more complex about their opinions and suggestions for special needs solutions. In addition, it is thought that the opinions of the teachers working in

different regions of our country will be given in order to identify the problems they experience and to make the inclusion studies in the country more concrete.

In this context, the general purpose of this research is the problems encountered by the teachers of Mustafa Kurtuluş Primary School in the inclusive schools in the region they work, the methods they use to solve them, and their opinions and suggestions regarding the education of the mainstreaming students.

Method

This section contains information about the research model, study group, data collection tools, data collection and data analysis. The Research Model was designed to be done using the semi-structured interview technique, one of the qualitative research methods. Ethics committee approval was obtained for the research.

Study Group

The study group of the research consists of 10 classroom teachers working at Mustafa Kurtuluş Primary School. Necessary permission was obtained from the TRNC Ministry of National Education and Culture. The study group was determined by criterion sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods. In criterion sampling, observation units can be formed from persons, events, objects or situations with specified qualifications. In this case, units (objects, events, etc.) that meet the criteria determined for the sample are taken into the sample (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2006). In the study, it was determined as a criterion that the teachers had students who received inclusive education. The teachers were given codes as K1, K2, K3, K4, K5, K6, K7, K8, K9, K10.

Demographic information about the classroom teachers participating in the research is shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

Demographic Information on Classroom Teachers

| Occupational Seniority | f | Gender | |
|------------------------|----|--------|------|
| | | Women | Male |
| less than 5 years | 2 | | |
| 6-10 | 1 | 6 | 4 |
| 11-15 | 3 | | |
| 16-20 | 3 | | |
| 21 and over | 1 | | |
| Total | 10 | 6 | 4 |

Looking at Table 1, 4 of the teachers are male and 6 of them are female. The vast majority of teachers have 11-15 and 16-20 seniority years. In addition, 2 of the teachers have 1-5 years of seniority, 1 of them has 6-10 years of seniority, and 1 of them has a seniority of 21 and above.

Data Collection Tools

A structured interview form, one of the qualitative methods, was used in data collection of the research. The post-research interview form consists of 7 open-ended questions to reveal the views of classroom teachers on inclusive education for children. After the literature review, the interview questions were finalized by taking the opinions of 3 experts on the interview form. Open-ended questions were asked to reveal the views of teachers on inclusive education practices. Information about the pandemic situations was collected via e-mail. The questions in the qualitative interview form;

- 1) What difficulties do you have when working with students with special needs in your classroom?
- 2) How would you like inclusive education in TRNC to be?
- 3) What are your views on a successful inclusion practice?
- 4) How do you meet your information needs while working with the inclusion student in your class?
- 5) Do you need in-service training while doing inclusive education?
- 6) Can you describe the relationship of the student with special needs who receive inclusive education with their peers? And what kind of activities do you do to increase the student's relationship with their peers?
- 7) How would you describe the involvement of the family of your student with special needs in your classroom? Were you able to involve the family in the education process?

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis technique was used in the analysis of the qualitative data obtained in the research. Themes were formed from the views of teachers on inclusive education. Based on the themes, comments were made on the subject. In order to support the comments, citations and the information of the people quoted are included.

Findings

The findings obtained as a result of the analysis of the data collected within the scope of the research and the comments on the findings are presented in tables.

Table 2.

Classroom Teachers; Opinions on Difficulties Experienced While Working with Special Needs Students

| Teacher Expressions | f | % |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Class size | 4 | 26.6 |
| Inability to focus | 3 | 20 |
| Reading and learning | 2 | 13.3 |
| Lack of Material | 2 | 13.3 |
| Communicating | 2 | 13.3 |
| IEP preparation | 1 | 6.6 |
| Lesson durations | 1 | 6.6 |
| Total | 15 | 100 |

As seen in Table 2, most of the classroom teachers stated that the reason for the difficulties they experienced while working with students with special needs was the size of the classroom and the inability to focus on the student with special needs. In addition to these

difficulties, students with special needs stated that they have problems in reading and learning, and that they have difficulties in communicating with their teachers and peers. It can be interpreted that the teachers stated the difficulties they experienced in preparing the IEP and preparing materials for the students with special needs. Some of the participants' statements were as follows.

K3: While working with the student with special needs in my class, I have difficulties due to lack of materials.

K5: I cannot show special attention because of other students in the class because they need special attention. In addition, time is not enough.

K8: We have problems with the behavior of not attending the class in the first lesson hours, the lesson change bell. Each bell is perceived as a break, and the 40-minute class is boring. The last 15 minutes are tough.

Table 3.

Classroom Teachers; Their Views on How They Want Inclusive Education Practices in TRNC

| Teacher Expressions | f | % |
|---|----------|----------|
| Making the diagnosis more convenient | 3 | 25 |
| Special Education Act | 2 | 16.6 |
| Should be Supported According to Interests | 2 | 16.6 |
| In-Service Training | 2 | 16.6 |
| Increasing the Number of Special Education Teachers | 1 | 8.3 |
| Integration Practices | 1 | 8.3 |
| Fully equipped institution | 1 | 8.3 |
| Total | 12 | 100 |

As seen in Table 3, most of the primary school teachers stated that the diagnosis should be made more accurately for inclusive education practices. They stated that inclusive education practices could be better with the Special Education Law. Teachers stated that inclusive education practices can be better when they are supported according to the interests of students with special needs. Teachers stated that they could overcome the lack of knowledge about inclusive education with in-service training. They stated that inclusive education can be better by increasing the number of Special Education Teachers and increasing fully equipped institutions. Some of the participants' statements were as follows.

K1: First of all, there must be an effective law.

K9: I would like there to be inclusive education where there is more education about inclusive education, there are special education teachers in every school, family education and legal rights are more for children with special needs.

Table 4.*Classroom Teachers; Views on a Successful Inclusion Education Practice*

| Teacher Expressions | f | % |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Cooperation | 5 | 31.2 |
| Orientation to interests | 3 | 18.7 |
| IEP | 3 | 18.7 |
| Peer acceptance | 1 | 18.7 |
| In-Service Training | 1 | 6.2 |
| Class size | 1 | 6.2 |
| Special Education Law | 1 | 6.2 |
| Fully equipped institution | 1 | 6.2 |
| Total | 16 | 100 |

According to Table 4, the majority of the classroom teachers interviewed stated the importance of cooperation for more successful inclusive education practices. Teachers stated that inclusive education practices can be better when they are supported according to the interests of students with special needs. Three of the teachers stated that the success of inclusive education can be achieved with IEP preparation. They stated that peer acceptance, in-service training, and a fully equipped institution are necessary for a successful inclusive education. They stated that inclusive education practices could be better with the Special Education Law. Some of the participants' statements were as follows.

K4: Individualized Education Programs should be implemented.

K8: The teacher must be knowledgeable and equipped about special education. Class size must be suitable.

K10: There should be an integration in which the student's development is followed through cooperation.

Table 5.*Classroom Teachers; Their Views on the Information Needs Emerged While Working with the Inclusion Student*

| Teacher Expressions | f | % |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Cooperation | 10 | 71.4 |
| Research | 4 | 28.5 |
| Total | 14 | 100 |

According to Table 5, most of the classroom teachers stated that they consulted the Special Education Teacher and Guidance Teacher to meet their information needs while working with the Inclusion Student, and that they could meet their information needs by collaborating with experienced teachers. Four of the Classroom Teachers state that they meet

their information needs by doing research. Some of the participants' statements were as follows.

K2: I tried to meet my information needs by consulting and asking Special Education Teachers and Counselors.

K4: I tried to meet my information needs by researching different sources on the subject.

Table 6.

Classroom Teachers; Opinions on In-Service Training Needs While Providing Inclusive Education

| Teacher Expressions | f | % |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Yes | 7 | 70 |
| Sometimes | 2 | 20 |
| No | 1 | 10 |
| Total | 10 | 100 |

According to Table 6, the majority of the classroom teachers who participated in the interview stated that they needed in-service training while performing inclusive education practices. Two of the teachers stated that they needed it sometimes. One of the teachers stated that she did not need in-service training. Some of the participants' statements were as follows.

K4: Of course I do.

K1: Sometimes I need it.

Table 7.

Classroom Teachers; Opinions of Students with Special Needs Receiving Inclusive Education on Peer Relationship

| Teacher Expressions | f | % |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|
| Communicating | 5 | 45.4 |
| Social acceptance | 4 | 36.3 |
| Teacher attitude | 2 | 18.1 |
| Total | 11 | 100 |

According to Table 7, the classroom teachers interviewed stated that the students with special needs who receive inclusive education can have a good communication with their peers. They stated that with the social acceptance of students with special needs by their peers, inclusive education could progress in a more positive direction. Two of our classroom teachers stated that the peer relations of these students depend on their teacher attitudes. Some of the participants' statements were as follows.

K5: The attitudes of peers to students with special needs who receive inclusive education are very important. In order to achieve this, studies should be carried out to improve teacher attitudes in a positive way.

K8: If the student with special needs feels accepted by their peers, they will want to behave like their peers.

Table 8.

Classroom Teachers; Opinions of Special Needs Students in their Class on Family Participation

| Category | f | Themes | Indication f. |
|----------|----|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Yes | 7 | Cooperates with family | 6 |
| | | Unable to communicate with family | 1 |
| No | 3 | Communication with shadow teacher | 1 |
| Total | 10 | | 8 |

According to Table 8, the majority of the classroom teachers interviewed stated that the family of the student with special needs in their class should participate in the inclusive education process. One of our teachers stated the necessity of family participation, but stated that she had difficulties in communicating. Three of our teachers stated that family participation is not necessary for inclusive education in any way. One of our teachers stated that communication with the shadow teacher was provided instead of communication with the family. Some of the participants' statements were as follows.

K1: I am in contact with the shadow teacher in the classroom, not with his family.

K4: His family usually makes him do the work that needs to be done at home.

K7: The family should be informed through periodic meetings.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, it was aimed to determine the opinions of classroom teachers who are inclusive students about inclusive education. The views of classroom teachers were determined in order to reveal the difficulties they encountered during the teaching arrangements for inclusive students and the support they received to overcome these difficulties. It is seen that teachers' views on how inclusive education can be better and what the participating classroom teachers do to overcome the difficulties related to inclusive students are progressing in a positive direction. The difficulties faced by classroom teachers who have inclusive students in their classrooms; lack of special education field knowledge, lack of time, social acceptance of students, lack of materials, cooperation outside of school and the failure to implement an appropriate special education law.

Most of the classroom teachers stated that the difficulties they experienced with students with special needs were the size of the class size and the inability to focus on students with special needs. Fuchs (2009-2010), Kuyini and Mangope (2011) and Vural (2008) reached similar results in their studies. Although there is a picture of class size in classes with mainstreaming students, this is not applicable in some schools. In the 23rd article of the "Special Education Services Regulation" in the Official Gazette number 26184 in force at the time of the study, the class sizes of the individuals who continue their education through mainstreaming were included in the regulation.

According to this; It was stated that class sizes would not exceed 25 students in classes with two people in need of special education, and 35 students in classes with one individual.

In the "Special Education Services Regulation" entered in the Official Gazette dated 7 July 2018 and numbered 30471, this number has been regulated as 15 in subparagraph d of 23 article. As classroom availability increases, it may be difficult for the teacher to coordinate instructional arrangements for the inclusive student with normally developing students. In addition to these difficulties, they stated that students with special needs have problems in reading and learning, and have difficulties in communicating with their teachers and peers.

Teachers stated the difficulties they encountered in preparing Ip and materials for students with special needs. Material is an indispensable element of education. The characteristics of the mainstreaming student and the materials learned are important educational tools in achieving success in teaching arrangements. The studies carried out are consistent with the findings of this study. Participants stated that one of the obstacles they faced was the lack of materials prepared for the inclusion student. The problem caused by the lack of material has been emphasized in some studies (Schumm and Vaughn, 1992; Vural, 2008; Kuyini and Mangope, 2011).

Most of the classroom teachers express more accurate diagnosis for the first time in inclusive education practices. They state that inclusive education practices can become better with the Special Education Law. Decree Law No. 573 has established that education services for individuals with special needs should develop student-centered programs according to their own philosophy, and created education services for individuals with special needs in order to provide education and increase them without labeling children with special needs (Vuran and Sarpdağ, 2001). They state that a successful inclusive education can be achieved with the existence of a special education law in the TRNC. They express their opinion that inclusive education can be better by increasing the number of Special Education Teachers and by increasing fully equipped institutions.

Most of the classroom teachers stated the importance of cooperation for more successful inclusive education. Teachers stated that inclusive education practices will be more successful when they are supported according to the interests of students with special needs. Three of the teachers stated that the success of inclusive education can be achieved with IEP preparation. In parallel with many studies (Sopko, 2003; Gartland, 2007; Fetter & Steketee, 2008; Russel, Hoffmann and Higgins, 2009), inclusive education practices of classroom teachers will be successful with the preparation of IEP (Çuhadar, 2006; Güven and Gürsel, 2010).

They stated that they consulted the Special Education Teacher and Counselor to solve the knowledge transfer while working with the Primary School Inclusion Student and that they could cooperate with the classroom teachers to get information. Collaboration is a way to encourage teachers to support each other. However, collaboration with teachers seems necessary to help meet the needs of students with special needs (Friend and Cook, 2012).

Majority of the classroom teachers stated that they needed in-service training while performing inclusive education practices. It can be said that the realization of a thought consistent with the conditions in education is related to the training of teachers through in-service training (Budak, 1999). Classroom teachers stated that students with special needs who receive inclusive education can have a good relationship with their peers. They stated that a successful inclusive education can be realized for students with special needs through group work, to make the student feel a sense of success through what the student can do, to give the student the responsibilities that he can do, to explain the situation of the student to his peers, to organize games that he can play with his peers, to encourage the student and not

to separate him from other students. Teachers should not only consider their academic achievements, but also try to be supported and accepted by their peers in special needs social environments. In order to achieve this, they want to direct the student to different activities and areas where they can be successful at school and in the classroom (Olçay-Gül and Vuran, 2015). They stated that the social acceptance of the students by their peers and their special needs can lead to a more positive progress in inclusive education. Two of our classroom teachers stated that this high peer relationship depends on teacher attitudes.

As a result, it will be prevented that the classroom teachers feel inadequate to eliminate the lack of knowledge of in-service trainings and to provide more successful inclusive education by increasing these trainings. A successful inclusive education can be achieved by ensuring that classroom teachers establish the necessary communication with their students with special needs and by supporting them in these social environments and trying to be accepted by their peers. With the support of overcoming these problems, a successful inclusive education can be realized in the TRNC.

Suggestions

In line with these results obtained in the research, the following suggestions can be made:

1. Trainings for students with special needs can be organized for primary school teachers, parents and interested parties.
2. Cooperation of administrators (classroom teacher, school counselor, administration, parents, etc.) can be provided to support them in social environments with special needs and to be accepted by their peers.
3. In an effective and learnable way, special learning-teaching practices can be arranged in a way that attracts the attention of the student and can be learned.
4. The classroom teacher can be provided with the necessary course to cope with the learning-teaching process. Inter-institutional cooperation can be seen as important.

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