





Problems and Practices Experienced by Preschool Teachers in Inclusive Education[‡]

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Abstract

This research study was conducted in order to determine the problems that preschool teachers experience in the inclusive education processes and to define the educational practices of teachers for students who benefit from inclusive education. The study was designed as qualitative research and purposeful sampling was used. In the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 preschool teachers working with disadvantaged children in different provinces of Turkey. In forming the questions in the semi-structured interview form, the relevant literature was scanned and the opinions of field experts were consulted. The data were analyzed by content analysis technique. Results of the study showed that preschool teachers do not feel professionally competent in inclusive education and they do not receive enough practical training in undergraduate education. It has been observed that teachers have some problems with children, families, administrators, and legislation in the learning and teaching process regarding inclusive education. In addition, it has been observed that the teachers make various practices for children, families, and the educational environment in order to create an inclusive education environment. It is thought that teachers should be supported in terms of knowledge and practice in inclusive education through in-service trainings and prospective teachers should be offered opportunities to work with children from different disadvantaged groups during undergraduate education.

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Introduction

One of the fundamental rights of all individuals, guaranteed by national and international legal regulations, is the right to education. With the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the United Nations [UN] Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the "(Revised)" European Social

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Charter (2007) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2009), the necessity of guaranteeing the right to education among all children without on gender, language, religion, and race discrimination is clearly stated. Considering the national legislation, 10th and 42nd articles of the Turkish Constitution emphasized that everyone is equal before the law and that no one can be deprived of the right to education and training (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası [TCA/Turkish Constitution], 1982). In the 12th and 46th articles of the Primary Education and Education Law No. 222, it is clearly stated that every child should benefit from education at the age of compulsory education and children in the disadvantaged group will receive special education and training (İlköğretim ve Eğitim Kanunu [İEK/Primary Education and Education Law], 1961). Again, in the 4th, 7th and 8th articles of the Turkish National Education Basic Law numbered 1739, it is stated that every child has the right to education and that special measures should be taken to raise children in need of special education and protection (Milli Eğitim Temel Kanunu [MEK/Turkish National Education Basic Law], 1973). In addition, in Article 15 of the 5378 Special Education Law, it is stated that “the education of the disabled cannot be prevented for any reason”(Engelliler Hakkında Kanun [EHK/ Law on the Disabled], 2005); in the 12th article of the Decree Law No. 573 on Special Education, it is stated that “The education of individuals in need of special education is carried out with their peers in accordance with individual education plans prepared by using appropriate methods and techniques in schools and institutions of all types and levels” (Özel Eğitim Hakkında Kanun Hükmünde Kararname [ÖEHKHK/Decree on Special Education], 1997).

It is emphasized that every child should have the right to education at national and international level, but unfortunately, research shows that some children experience negative conditions. These children have problems even with accessing basic resources and services. They either cannot benefit from education, which is their basic right, or they have difficulties in accessing education (Burcu, 2017). The children who have the most difficulties in accessing education are; refugees who have a low socioeconomic level, those who live in rural areas or war zones far from the center, those who have to come from different countries, female children, children of different ethnic origin, and those who are in need of special needs (Stubbs, 2008). Children in this group are called disadvantaged children. Investing in the disadvantaged students who are deprived of education will reflect on society as positive results with higher education achievement, less unemployment, and sustainable development. Therefore, in order to make the human resources of countries more efficient, an equitable education system must be designed and implemented first (Eğitim Reformu Girişimi [ERG/Turkish Education Reform Initiative], 2014). To achieve this end, inclusive education policies have started to be implemented in some countries around the world (United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund [UNICEF] and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2007).

Inclusive education is an education system that ensures equal education for all individuals (Aktekin, 2017). While inclusive education is a concept that is confused with the terms of mainstreaming education and special education (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Özel Eğitim ve Rehberlik Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü [MEBÖERHGM/Ministry of National Education General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services], 2013), today, it has turned into a structure that includes many issues, including individual differences as well as gender-based inequalities, immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, cultural, and social differences (Çelik, 2017). In this context, inclusive education is defined as providing equal access to educational opportunities by eliminating the discrimination factor (Aktekin, 2017; Çelik, 2017; Department of Education and Training [DET], 2004; Florian, Young, & Rouse, 2010; UNESCO, 2005).

The aims of inclusive education are to ensure the participation of all individuals in education and to increase learning and to remove discrimination. It is to design the education system to respond to all differences and to improve school environments (Booth & Dyssegaard, 2008). With inclusive education, the relationship between school and community is strengthened and education is

recognized as an important element for society. It is aimed to develop schools for both the students and the staff. Inclusive education aims to benefit the whole school. When teachers take on the task of making their classes and schools more inclusive, they become more skilled and better practitioners. In this context, they help to overcome any barrier that prevents access to education and participation (Mariga & McConkey, 2014).

There are some factors that hinder the implementation of inclusive education. Teacher's beliefs, expectations, and attitudes, curriculum, teaching methods, and evaluation process can be counted among these factors (MEB ÖERHGM, 2013). To eliminate these factors, it is necessary for teachers to have the necessary competencies in inclusive education, to ensure that they receive quality education in these subjects, to establish a link between academic knowledge and practical knowledge in teacher education, to avoid discrimination among students, and to work on interdisciplinary cooperation (Demirel-Kaya, 2019; ERG, 2016a; Navarro, Zervas, Gesa, & Sampson, 2016).

Teachers are key players in organizing educational environments to meet the diverse needs of students and provide them with equal educational opportunities. This situation requires teachers to be equipped with the competence to provide inclusive education (Navarro et al., 2016). For the formation of an inclusive education system, not all responsibility is left to the teacher; collaboration of other stakeholders of education such as students, teachers, parents, school administrators is also of great importance (ERG, 2016a; Flem, Moen, & Gudmundsdottir, 2004). Therefore, active participation and support of school administrators in the inclusive education process is also critical. There is a significant increase in the level of awareness regarding the concept of inclusion in schools that receive administrative support in inclusive education practices (Ali, Mustapha, & Jelas, 2006).

An important component of inclusive education is parents. Because there is no success in inclusive education in a structure where parents' support and active participation cannot be provided (ERG, 2016b). In inclusive education, it is important to make some arrangements in the educational environment. In this context, the use of appropriate technology and customized materials, the preparation of flexible programs, small group educational applications, the use of special and alternative models for students in assessment and evaluation, and the arrangement of school buildings for students, etc. studies can be done (DET, 2004).

Among the objectives of UNESCO's Education for All Movement are to extend early childhood education to include disadvantaged children and to ensure that children have access to free, compulsory and qualified basic education (ERG, 2016a). In this context, it would be appropriate to start inclusive education practices from the pre-school education stage. When the literature is examined, it is seen that there are some studies conducted to determine teachers' and teacher candidates' views on inclusive education (Akbulut, Yılmaz, Karakoç, Erciyas, & Akşin-Yavuz, 2021) and it can be seen that preschool teachers are aware of the importance of inclusive education and have positive opinions about inclusive education (Cengiz-Şayan, 2020; Erol-Sahillioğlu, 2020; Kahriman-Pamuk, & Bal, 2019). In addition, in the preschool period, there are studies that examine the opinions of teachers about the problems experienced by children who do not speak Turkish (Atasoy-Çiçek, 2017), immigrant children (Avcı, 2019; Aydın & Kurtulmuş, 2018; Dicle, 2020; Güven, Efe-Azkeskin, & Yılmaz, 2018; Mercan-Uzun & Bütün, 2016) and children who benefit from inclusive education (Akkaya & Güçlü, 2018; Dikici-Sığirtmaç, Hoş, & Abbak, 2011; Doğu, 2017; Erbaş & Çoruk, 2021; Gök & Erbaş, 2011; Özaydın & Çolak, 2011). However, no study has been found in the literature to determine the problems experienced in the education of all children (with low socioeconomic level, living in rural areas, girls, refugees, children with special needs, etc.) who are within the scope of inclusive education in the preschool period.

For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the problems that preschool teachers experience in the inclusive education process?
2. What are the practices of preschool teachers in the inclusive education process?

Method

Research Model

This study, which was carried out to determine teachers' views on the problems experienced in inclusive education in the preschool period, was designed in the phenomenology pattern, which is one of the qualitative research methods. Phenomenology is a research design that gives us the opportunity to examine in-depth phenomena that we are aware of, which are not completely foreign to us, but that we cannot fully grasp (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018).

Study Group

In phenomenology, the data are obtained from the person or persons who have experienced the phenomenon in question and who can express their experiences about this phenomenon (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The study group of this research consisted of pre-school teachers working in official independent kindergartens and nursery classes in various provinces of Turkey in the 2020-2021 academic year. The aim of reaching preschool teachers working in different provinces of Turkey is to determine the similarities and differences in the problems and practices in different provinces. Voluntary or easily accessible teachers working in different provinces were reached by making use of the easily accessible case sampling method (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018) in order for speed and practicality in the research. Due to difficulties in reaching teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic process, 20 volunteer preschool teachers were reached. The personal information of the teachers participating in the research is presented in Table 1.

When Table 1 is examined, 19 of the teachers participating in the study group are women and 1 of them is a male participant. 7 of the teachers participating in the research work in independent kindergarten and 13 in nursery class. It is seen that 3 teachers' experience fall between 1-5 years, 10 between 6-10 years, 5 between 11-15 years, 1 between 16-20 years and 1 has been working for 21 years and over. It is observed that 19 of the teachers completed their education at the undergraduate level and 1 at the Master level. It is observed that the participants did not take any courses for inclusive education in pre-service training and they all work with children in the disadvantaged group. In addition, it is found that 9 of the participants attended in-service training and 11 of them did not attend any in-service training for inclusive education.

Table 1. *Demographic Information About Preschool Teacher*

Variable		N
Gender	Female	19
	Male	1
Type of Institution	Independent Kindergarten	7
	Nursery Class	13
Professional Seniority	1-5 years	3
	6-10 years	10
	11-15 years	5
	16-20 years	1
	21 years and over	1

Table 1 (Cont.)

Education Level	Undergraduate Degree	19
	Master	1
	Doctorate	
Taking Courses for Inclusive Education Pre-service	Yes	0
	No	20
Working Status with Children in Disadvantaged Group	Yes	20
	No	0
In-service Training on Inclusive Education	Yes	9
	No	11

Data Collection Instruments

The data of the study were collected through the "Personal Information Form" and "Semi-Structured Teacher Interview Form" developed by the researchers. In order to increase the quality and credibility of the research, three different faculty members who are experts in the fields of pre-school education, assessment and evaluation, and special education were consulted about the content validity of the interview questions created by the researchers. After the expert opinion, the pilot application of the interview form was made. The pilot application was carried out with five preschool teachers. Necessary adjustments were made according to the expert opinions and pilot applications, and the interview form was finalized. In the personal information form, there are seven questions about the gender of the participants, the type of institution they work, the years of professional seniority, and the level of education etc. There are six questions in the semi-structured teacher interview form. The questions in the semi-structured interview form are included in the inclusive education process of preschool teachers. It includes titles on the problems experienced by children, families, learning-teaching process, administrators and legislation, and the practices of teachers towards inclusive education.

Data Collection Process

After the data collection tools were developed, the necessary ethical permission was obtained for the research. Prior to the interview, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and it was stated that their personal information would not be shared with third parties. The interviews were conducted online by making an appointment with the preschool teachers. The interviews lasted between 30-45 minutes. At this stage, in order to prevent data loss, the interviews were recorded with a voice recording device with the permission of the participants. The recorded data was later turned into a written document in computer environment.

Data Analysis

Research data were analyzed through content analysis. The purpose of content analysis is to reach the concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data. In this type of analysis, meaningful sections are coded within themselves, and the codes are classified into categories and themes are reached from categories (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). The recordings made during the interviews with the study group were transcribed and transferred to the computer as they were. This process was repeated for 20 preschool teachers. A separate file was opened for each question and the researchers

read the answers of the study group many times and produced codes from the data and a code list was prepared. The data outside the research questions were excluded from the coding. Researchers coded the same dataset and compared coding similarities and differences. Codes with meaningful relationships were brought together to form categories. As a result of the research, 9 categories and 34 codes were reached. In the findings section of the study, codes such as "T1, T2, T3, ..., T15" were used instead of their real names when quoting the participants.

Validity and Reliability Studies

In order to ensure credibility in the research, the data were converted into a written document after they were collected. Researchers have strived to remain neutral throughout the process. In addition, the opinions obtained from the participants were presented directly in the research. Expert examination was used at all stages of the study. In order to ensure transferability, the selection of the working group, the development of the data collection tool and the data collection process are described in detail. In order to ensure consistency, opinions and suggestions were received from faculty members who are experts in the field, both during the process of creating the questions in the interview form and during the coding of the data. In addition, for the reliability of the study, the same data set was coded separately by the researchers and a consensus was reached among the researchers in the coding (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018).

Results

The findings of the research are presented in 2 parts taking the research questions into account. In this section, findings regarding preschool teachers' problems and their practices in the inclusive education process are included.

Findings Regarding the Problems Preschool Teachers Experienced in the Inclusive Education Process

The opinions of preschool teachers about the problems they experience in the inclusive education process are given in Table 2.

Table 2. *Problems Experienced by Preschool Teachers in the Inclusive Education Process*

Category	Code	N
Problems Experienced in the Learning and Teaching Process	Classroom management problems	16
	Problems arising from the educational environment and materials	12
	Problems with taking security measures	9
	Crowded class size problems	7
	Problems in event planning	4
	Problems in evaluation	3
	Total	51
Teacher's Occupational Inadequacy in Inclusive Education	Lack of experience in inclusive education	6
	Theoretical undergraduate education	5
	Inadequate education in special education	4
	Not working practically with a disadvantaged group in undergraduate education	1
	Total	16

Table 2 (Cont.)

Problems Encountered with Children	Immigrant children with language problems	9
	The long diagnosis process of the child	2
	Presence of undiagnosed children in the classroom	2
	Difficulty in providing individual education to disadvantaged children	2
	Children of families with low socio-economic status have problems in accessing the material	1
Total		16
Problems Encountered with Families	Problems in cooperation with the family	9
	Problems in family participation	8
	Problems caused by the family's refusal to accept their child's situation	5
	Problems in language and communication with the family	3
Total		25
Problems Encountered with Administrators	Lack of support for the problems faced by the teacher	5
	Administrator's failure to comply with the legislation on inclusive education	4
	The administrator's lack of awareness and knowledge about inclusive education	4
Total		13
Problems Related to Legislation	Lack of professional staff working in different disciplines to support teachers in the inclusive education process and not being employed	3
	The lack of professional competence and supervision of special education teachers working in the Guidance Research Center	1
	Insufficient legal regulations regarding the special education type and level of the child	1
Total		5

*The frequencies specified in the table depend on the number of opinions expressed by the teachers and do not reflect the number of teachers in the study group.

When Table 2 is examined, when the category of problems encountered in the learning-teaching process is examined, it is seen that there are six different codes related to this category. These are problems in classroom management ($f = 16$), problems arising from the educational environment and materials ($f = 12$), problems with taking security measures ($f = 9$), problems with crowded class size ($f = 7$), problems in event planning ($f = 4$) and problems in evaluation ($f = 3$). Some examples of direct quotes from teachers' views for each code are as follows:

I had a hard time in the classroom management, should I deal with my student with autism or my other students (T2)?

I can say that we have an insufficient number of inventories, even for regular students, in most of the classrooms. Therefore, it is a fact that we need inventories for our disadvantaged children (T17).

One of my children had a tendency to take all the toys and throw to his friends. At that time I had to remove all the materials. I had to organize the environment, I encountered such a problem (T15).

Due to crowded classes, it is difficult to give disadvantaged students enough time and attention (T17).

The work done and the activities prepared can be above the skills of our child who requires special education. For example, while a student with autism simply does not know the color red, you have to work with other children to achieve different achievements. Therefore, the activities you do in the classroom and the activities that the child needs may not overlap with each other sometimes (T19).

Especially, diagnosed student went to Guidance Research Center [GRC] 2 days a week and could not come to class. Our refugee students were especially coming 3 days a week. Unfortunately, I could not observe too many evaluations because we were experiencing absenteeism problems (T1).

When the category of problems experienced by teachers in the study group due to their professional inadequacy in inclusive education is examined, it is seen that there are four different codes related to this category. These are coded as lack of experience in inclusive education ($f = 6$), theoretical undergraduate education ($f = 5$), inadequate education in special education ($f = 4$), and Not working practically with a disadvantaged group in undergraduate education ($f = 1$). Teachers' views for each code can be exemplified as follows:

Of course, when we encountered disadvantaged students at the beginning of the profession, I had difficulties due to inexperience, inability to establish proper communication with the family, and lack of information (T12).

Maybe it would be different if I had been a little more experienced with my disabled student because as you know, undergraduate education is not very sufficient in terms of practice (T9).

I am not a very competent teacher in special education. Because we only had a special education course in this field at the university, and it was a theory-oriented one(T4).

An extra training could have been given to our fellow teachers who would work in the Eastern Turkey. After the universities, most of us work in Eastern Turkey, no study has been done regarding the conditions of these places (T13).

When we look at the category of problems that preschool teachers encounter with children in Table 2, it is seen that five different codes have been reached. These are Immigrant children have language problems ($f = 9$), the long diagnosis process of the child ($f = 2$), presence of undiagnosed children in the classroom ($f = 2$), difficulty in providing individual education to disadvantaged children ($f = 2$) and children of families with low socio-economic status have problems in accessing the material ($f = 1$). Examples of quotations obtained from teachers' opinions on this subject are given below.

Looking into our eyes, we don't speak each other's language. He did not understand us, we did not understand him, of course it is a problem that we do not speak different languages (T11).

When we have a student with disadvantages or a health problem, we refer him to the counseling service. It directs to GRC. However, it takes a year to get the results, so the school year is over because the process is too long (T18).

The undiagnosed student actually exhausts his teacher and other students more than the student diagnosed. Because when the student is diagnosed, you progress systematically. Since he also gets special education, we can get more successful results from the child when you communicate with the special education teacher and support what he has done in special education sessions (T18).

The children with autism and hearing impairment, I worked with had a lot of needs. Therefore, they had to be reinforced mostly by individual training and individual studies. However, while there

are studies to be carried out with twenty students in the classroom environment, there is not much time to be devoted to that child (T19).

There were children with low socio-economic status in our classes. They could not buy materials and supplies. I was trying to meet many of them myself (T14).

When Table 2 is examined in the category of problems encountered with families, it is seen that there are four different codes related to this category. These are problems in cooperating with the family ($f = 9$), problems in family participation ($f = 8$), problems caused by the family's refusal to accept their child's situation ($f = 5$), and problems in language and communication with the family ($f = 3$). Some of the opinions of teachers in this category are as follows.

The family and the school teacher cannot establish the necessary cooperation, so it is actually a problem I am experiencing (T17).

The family did not participate at all. I did not see such a thing as family involvement. They came from a distant village, maybe it had an effect too (T3).

If the family does not accept the child's situation, you cannot do anything. Anyway, they say that my child is normal so the family does not take him to the doctor or special education. Depending on these, there are situations where the teacher is insufficient (T10).

Especially in refugee families, there is a problem of communication and they do not know our language. In other words, there is a problem in the dialogue and communication between the family and the teacher (T16).

When Table 2 is examined in the category of problems encountered with the administrators, it is seen that three different codes have been reached for this category. These are the lack of support for the problems faced by the teacher ($f = 5$), the administrator's failure to comply with the legislation on inclusive education ($f = 4$) and the administrator's lack of awareness and knowledge about inclusive education ($f = 4$). Some of the opinions of teachers in this category are as follows.

As far as I have heard in the institutions where I work or around me, none of the administrators support their teachers. They register for the school, then they do not follow the inclusive education process. How the teacher communicates with that child or the teacher maybe has trouble with the parent. Even when there are problems, the administration does not attempt to help the teacher (T6).

As a problem with the administrators, normally two mainstreaming students are allowed in a ten-person class or only one in a class of twenty, this is written in the regulations, but frankly, this is not followed very much (T15).

School administrators should also be made aware of inclusive education. Many school principals are unaware of how important inclusive education is. They should also support the teacher (T16).

When the category of problems related to legislation is examined in Table 2, it is seen that three different codes related to this category have been reached. These are the lack of professional staff working in different disciplines to support teachers in the inclusive education process not being employed ($f = 3$), the lack of professional competence and supervision of special education teachers working in the Guidance Research Center ($f = 1$), and insufficient legal regulations regarding the special education type and level of the child ($f = 1$). The opinions of the teachers in this category are as follows:

It was very difficult for them to participate in the activities in the classroom because they expected a lot of individual attention. So I needed someone to get extra help (T19).

There is a kindergarten teacher and a special education teacher in the classrooms of special education kindergartens. But there are no special education teachers in kindergartens providing normal education (T10).

Unfortunately they can work with teachers who graduated from different departments in special education institutions because there is a lack of special education teachers, I think this is a problem (T5).

Diagnosis process takes a lot of time during legal assessments. While the students we refer to GRC should be given part-time mainstreaming, children with extreme levels are given full-time mainstreaming, which makes it difficult for the teacher in the classroom (T20).

Findings Regarding Preschool Teachers' Practices in the Inclusive Education Process

Table 3 includes views on preschool teachers' practices in the inclusive education process.

Table 3. *Preschool Teachers' Practices in the Inclusive Education Process*

Category	Code	N
Applications for Children	Developing and implementing activities according to developmental appropriateness	16
	Providing emotional and psychological support to the child benefiting from inclusive education	6
	Making activities about respect for differences in the classroom	5
	Providing peer support to the child benefiting from inclusive education	2
	Total	29
Applications for Families	Informing, educating and guiding parents	4
	Parent visits	3
	Total	7
Applications for the Education Environment	Providing material support to a socioeconomically disadvantaged child	5
	Making necessary physical arrangements in the educational environment	3
	Preparing appropriate material for the needs of the child benefiting from inclusive education	1
	Total	9

*The frequencies specified in the table depend on the number of opinions expressed by the teachers and do not reflect the number of teachers in the study group.

When Table 3 is examined, looking at the category of applications for children, it is seen that there are four different codes related to this category. These are developing and implementing activities according to developmental appropriateness ($f = 16$), providing emotional and psychological support to the child benefiting from inclusive education ($f = 6$), making activities about respect for differences in the classroom ($f = 5$) and providing peer support to the child benefiting from inclusive education ($f = 2$). Some of the teachers' views in this category are as follows:

I work according to what the child needs developmentally, for example, if there is no vocabulary, I study speaking skills. If he does not have a eating habit, I am working on this (T5).

First of all, I stroke the hair of all the children during the day, but I hug the disadvantaged children more so that they feel safe and trust me. Regardless of the disadvantage, you can save that child's life with a hug (T13).

I give explanations to the children about their friends, giving them information that will enable them to think positively, maybe give them information about their friend's special situation when they are absent, and make statements that will make the children a little more understanding and loving towards him (T19).

You try to put students with good diction in Turkish next to them (T13).

When Table 3 is examined in the category of applications for families, it is seen that there are two different codes related to this category. These are informing, educating and guiding parents ($f = 4$) and parent visit ($f = 3$). Some of the teachers' views in this category are listed below:

We had very good books and cards at our school. I shared it with parents in the past years. I used to send a weekly book for my down syndrome student and for my student with language development problems. I would say you will read them every night. I gave them language cards from school. I said it will be worked at home in this way. I had this kind of dialogue with my parents (T11).

I made family interviews more often, for example I made frequent home visits. In other words, the child thinks that you are not a stranger and tries to behave closer to you when he is in closer contact with the family (T18).

Looking at Table 3 in the category of applications for the educational environment, it is seen that there are three different codes related to this category. These include providing material support to a socio-economically disadvantaged child ($f = 5$), making necessary physical arrangements in the educational environment ($f = 3$), and preparing appropriate material for the needs of the child benefiting from inclusive education ($f = 1$). Some of the views of teachers in this category are as follows:

When he is a socio-economically disadvantaged child, I try to somehow provide him with material. You know, I do not separate that student from the others because he has no material. Somehow I assure (T14).

When we have children with hyperactivity or autism, of course, you need to organize the class. You can put the materials that may harm the children on the upper shelves. There were times when we adjusted the table and chair layouts for the physically handicapped (T11).

If there was a need for material, I was preparing a material for my specially educated student (T4).

Discussion, Conclusion and Implications

The results of the study, which aimed to determine the teachers' opinions about the inclusive education process in the preschool period, are organized in two parts: within the framework of the problems preschool teachers experience in the inclusive education process and their opinions about the practices they make. In the first part of the research results, it was observed that the problems in the process of learning and teaching were the primary problems experienced by teachers in the inclusive education process. Teachers stated that they cannot meet the interests and needs of children who need more support due to situations such as special needs, being refugees, being socially-economically disadvantaged, and other children in the classroom at the same time. In addition, they stated that this situation caused them to have difficulties in their classroom management skills from time to time and that crowded classes increased the severity of this problem. This problem can be solved by having a staff to support teachers in the classroom and reducing the class size. In parallel with our research findings, 21.4% of the teachers who participated in the study by Başturan and Görgü (2020) stated that crowded class was a problem. In accordance with the National Pedagogical Standards for Primary Education in Croatia, in case there are children with special needs in classrooms, the size of the class is reduced and mobile teams consisting of experts such as teaching assistants and sign language interpreters are established and various cooperation activities are carried out in the inclusive education process (Bouillet, 2013). As can be seen, while the conditions that enable children with special needs to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills are encouraged, this law also supports the teacher by reducing the burden of the teacher in the inclusive education process. Cooperation is

inevitable for the success of inclusive education. In Turkey, all responsibility should not be left to the teacher and cooperation between stakeholders should be ensured in this process.

In the study, it was observed that because the educational environment and materials were insufficient to meet the individual needs of all children, teachers had difficulties in planning activities and arranging the educational environment to meet the needs of all children. The inclusive education environment should contain materials for individual differences. (Abercrombie, 2009). Akalın, Demir, Sucuoğlu, Bakkaloğlu, and İşcen (2014) examined the needs of preschool teachers to support the development of children with special needs in their classrooms and it was determined that preschool teachers had problems arising from the lack of knowledge to use different teaching methods and lack of materials. Similarly, in the study conducted by Tekin-Ersan and Ata (2017), preschool teachers stated that crowded classrooms, lack of assistant teachers, and insufficient physical facilities cause problems in the implementation of Individual Education Plans [IEP]. The results of these studies are similar to the findings of the study. Municipalities in Finland sponsors the early childhood education and pre-school education of all children residing in the region (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2020b). In this context, also in our country support from local governments and society can be obtained for meeting the material needs of schools and pre-school education becoming widespread.

Akalın et al. (2014), in their study examining the needs of preschool teachers in supporting the development of children with special needs in their classrooms, concluded that nearly half of the teachers participating in the study felt inadequate in classroom management, coping with problematic behaviors, and evaluating children's situations. The results of these studies are parallel to the findings of the study.

In the study, it was determined that teachers lack knowledge and experience about inclusive education. Teachers stated that they received a theoretical education during their undergraduate education, they did not receive enough training in special education and that they could not gain enough experience with the children in the disadvantaged group during their teaching internship. This finding indicates that teacher training programs should be reviewed. Teacher candidates should be trained in a way to meet the needs of students in different disadvantaged groups with a practice-oriented education as well as theoretical education. When the literature is examined, it has been observed that there are studies that conclude that teachers' competencies in inclusive education are weak (Ali et al., 2006; An, Hu, & Horn, 2018; Flem et al., 2004; Florian et al., 2010; Haug, 2017; Hay, Smitt, & Paulsen, 2001). In the study conducted by Altun and Gülben (2009) with preschool teachers, it was concluded that teachers felt inadequate in the field of special education and this was due to the teachers' not getting enough training in special education in undergraduate education. Similarly, in the study conducted by Sucuoğlu, Bakkaloğlu, Karasu, Demir, and Akalın (2013) to determine the relationship between pre-school teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards mainstream education, it was concluded that preschool teachers had a lack of knowledge about inclusive education. Likewise, Ünal and Aladağ (2020) found in their study that teachers do not feel themselves competent. In the study of Ertürk, Özen-Altinkaynak, Veziroğlu, and Erkan (2014), it was determined that preschool teachers had some problems while using most of the information they received during their undergraduate education in their professional lives. All these studies clearly show the necessity of making arrangements in teacher training programs in the context of children with special needs and inclusion.

In the study, it was concluded that teachers had language problems with refugee children and their families and could not communicate because they speak different languages. It has been determined that there are many studies in the literature that indicate the language problem in inclusive education (Aykırı, 2017; Cengiz-Şayan, 2020; Ünal & Aladağ, 2020). Due to the current geographical location of our country, it is a necessity to solve the education problem of refugees. In order to solve this problem, in 2014, education of refugee children was started in Temporary Education Centers [TEC] starting from

pre-school education level. It can be said that the language problem could not be solved at the desired level since this initiative is only in provinces where refugee children are concentrated.

Teachers who participated in the study expressed the presence of undiagnosed children in the classroom and the fact that children with severe diagnoses continue their education full-time as a problem. However, the understanding of inclusive education defends the right of all children to get education and that children should not be discriminated against. The difficulty that teachers experience when there are children with special needs in their classrooms may be due to their inadequate education in their undergraduate education and the responsibility in their classrooms being solely on them. Teachers also stated that they had difficulty in providing individual education to disadvantaged children. Tiwari, Das, & Sharma (2015) support the inevitability of this problem in the study, stating that it is not possible for teachers to take care of children with special needs in overcrowded classes.

Although the cooperation between parents who best know children and teachers is an important part of supporting the development of the child (Flem et al., 2004), it was concluded that families could not cooperate with teachers adequately and did not attend family participation activities. It has been concluded that families with disadvantaged children, especially those with children with special needs, have difficulties in accepting the situation of their children and therefore do not respond positively to cooperation. Teachers stated that they had communication problems with other families as well as refugee children due to language problems and this situation negatively affected cooperation. Similar to this result, it was found in the study of Altun and Gülben (2009) that families unconsciously reject their children with special needs. In the study conducted by Tekin-Ersan and Ata (2017), it was determined that most of the teachers participating in the study could not communicate with families during the IEP process and no family was involved in the process. Durmuşoğlu (2013) stated in her study that family education and participation activities are a good opportunity for parents to get to know their children better and to strengthen communication with the child. In order for families to be more involved in the education of their children and to accept their special situation in the inclusive education process, more attention should be given to awareness raising and orientation activities in schools and families should be educated.

Some teachers in the study stated that they did not receive sufficient support from school administrators in the inclusive education process and that the administrators did not comply with the regulations on the number of mainstream students required to be in the classroom. In addition, they stated that there was a problem in the process due to the lack of knowledge and awareness of the administrators about inclusive education. The primary person responsible for meeting the needs of students in schools is school administrators (Dilekçi, 2019). Administrators have a great role to play in creating a positive climate for inclusive education at school. In the study of Valeo (2008), most of the teachers stated that school administrators do not provide leadership or support. Considering the findings, the necessity of raising the awareness of managers about inclusive education stands out. Necessary measures in this regard should be addressed urgently.

Teachers stated that there is no professional staff working in different disciplines such as special education teachers that will support them in pre-school education institutions and that people graduated from different departments work as special education teachers in GRC as problems arise from the legislation in the inclusive education process. According to the policies and regulations of countries such as Finland, Cyprus, France, the Netherlands, and Italy and Portugal, the needs of every child should be recognized and met through inter-sectoral cooperation. In addition, the student-related situations are discussed by the expert group, and this group includes school health services, psychologists, and social workers in addition to the teaching staff (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2019; 2020a; 2020b; 2020c; 2020d; 2021). In Chile, students are provided with different experts and resources to support their learning and development in line with their needs (Tamayo, Rebolledo, & Besoain-Saldana, 2017). In this context, there are problems with professionals

working in the inclusive education process and multidisciplinary studies in our country. Necessary measures should be taken in this regard.

In the second part of the research results, it was determined that pre-school teachers made various practices for children, families and the educational environment within the scope of their opinions about the applications they made in the inclusive education process.

It was observed that teachers developed and implemented activities according to developmental appropriateness in the inclusive education process, provided emotional and psychological support to the child benefiting from inclusive education, engaged in activities related to respect for differences in the classroom, and provided peer support to the child benefiting from inclusive education. In an inclusive education approach, instruction must be designed to meet the unique needs of each child (Tiwari et al., 2015). In the study, teachers stated that they provided information and guidance for families and reinforced their support by visiting parents. In the educational environment, it was stated that they tried to provide material support to the socioeconomically disadvantaged child, made the necessary physical arrangements, and prepared materials in the educational environment according to the needs of their students. Considering these findings, it is seen that teachers make an effort to enable children to benefit from inclusive education. In Kırılmaz (2019)'s study, it was concluded that classroom teachers benefited from peer education and classroom collaboration to involve refugee students in the process, while Kahrıman-Pamuk and Bal (2019) concluded that most teachers did not make a special arrangements on inclusive education.

It has been concluded that teachers feel inadequate about inclusive education, although they use various practices inside and outside the classroom to provide an inclusive education environment. They try to find various solutions to the problems they experience in the inclusive education process, but the fact that the training they receive before and after the service in inclusive education is not sufficient to solve the problems they encounter may have caused the teachers to feel inadequate. In addition, the differentiation of the needs of each child in the disadvantaged group may have affected the teachers' feeling of inadequacy.

Based on the results of the research, the following recommendations can be made for practitioners, administrators, policy makers and researchers:

- The research is limited to pre-school teachers working in official preschool education institutions affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in the 2020-2021 academic year. In further studies, the opinions of school administrators, guidance teachers, special education teachers and families should be taken while determining the problems experienced in inclusive education in the pre-school period.
- The research is limited to the semi-structured interview method and the items in the semi-structured teacher interview form. In further studies, data diversity should be ensured by collecting data using different data collection tools such as observations and questionnaires.
- Effective in-service training should be provided to increase teachers' awareness of inclusive education, to eliminate their inadequacies and to develop a positive attitude.
- Undergraduate programs should be rearranged so that prospective teachers have high quality internship experiences in inclusive education.
- An effective policy for inclusive education should be developed from a multi-disciplinary perspective by producing various studies and projects in cooperation with different institutions and organizations.
- Preschool education programs prepared within the framework of this policy should be revised with a holistic perspective taking the best interests of all children into consideration.
- Administrators should support teachers, emphasize the importance of school-family cooperation and family participation, and carry out joint work with them.

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**TÜRKÇE GENİŞ ÖZET****Okul Öncesi Eğitim Öğretmenlerinin Kapsayıcı Eğitimde Yaşadıkları Sorunlar ve Uygulamalar****Giriş**

Günümüzde kapsayıcı eğitim yaklaşımı, başta bireysel farklılıklar olmak üzere, cinsiyet temelli eşitsizlikler, göçmenler, mülteciler, sığınmacılar, kültürel ve toplumsal çeşitliliklere kadar birçok konuyu içeren bir yapıya bürünmüştür. Bu bağlamda kapsayıcı eğitim; özel gereksinimi olsun ya da olmasın, sosyal, kültürel, eğitimsel, yaşamsal aktivite ve fırsatlara tüm toplum üyelerinin eşit düzeyde erişim sağlayabilmesi, ayrımcılık faktörünün ortadan kaldırılarak eğitim olanaklarından eşit şekilde yararlanabilmesini sağlamak şeklinde tanımlanmıştır (Aktekin, 2017; Çelik, 2017; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2005).

Öğretmenler, eğitim ortamlarının öğrencilerin farklı ihtiyaçlarını karşılayabilecek ve onlara eşit eğitim fırsatları sağlayacak şekilde düzenlenmesinde kilit oyuncularındır. Bu durum öğretmenlerin kapsayıcı eğitimi sağlayabilecek yeterlilikte donatılmasını gerektirmektedir (Navarro, Zervas, Gesa, & Sampson, 2016). Kapsayıcı bir eğitim sisteminin oluşması için tüm sorumluluk öğretmene bırakılmayarak, öğrenciler, öğretmenler, veliler, okul idarecileri gibi eğitimin diğer paydaşların işbirliği içinde olmalarının önemi büyüktür (ERG, 2016a; Flem, Moen & Gudmundsdottir, 2004).

UNESCO'nun (1990) Herkes için Eğitim Hareketinin 2015 yılına kadar gerçekleştirilmesi planlanan hedefleri arasında erken çocukluk eğitiminin dezavantajlı durumdaki çocukları da kapsayacak şekilde yaygınlaştırılması ve çocukların ücretsiz, zorunlu ve nitelikli temel eğitime erişmelerinin sağlanması yer almaktadır (ERG, 2016a). Bu bağlamda kapsayıcı eğitim uygulamalarına okul öncesi eğitim basamağından itibaren başlanması yerinde olacaktır. Alan yazınında okul öncesi dönemde kapsayıcı eğitime ilişkin öğretmen görüşlerini belirlemeye yönelik yapılan çalışmalara bakıldığında okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin kapsayıcı eğitimin öneminin farkında olduğu ve kapsayıcı eğitimle ilgili olumlu düşüncelere sahip oldukları görülmektedir (Cengiz-Şayan, 2020; Erol-Sahillioğlu, 2020; Kahriman-Pamuk & Bal, 2019). Ancak ülkemizde okul öncesi dönemde kapsayıcı eğitimde yaşanan sorunlarını belirlemeye yönelik bir çalışmaya rastlanmamıştır. Bu bağlamda ülkemizde kapsayıcı eğitimle ilgili okul öncesi eğitimde yaşanan sorunların belirlenerek çözüm önerilerinin geliştirilmesi kapsayıcı eğitimin niteliğini arttırmak açısından önem arz etmektedir. Bu tespitten hareketle yapılan çalışmada okul öncesi eğitim öğretmenlerinin kapsayıcı eğitimde yaşadıkları sorunlar ve uygulamaların incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır.

Yöntem

Bu araştırma, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden olgu bilim deseniyle tasarlanmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubu, 2020-2021 eğitim öğretim yılında Türkiye'nin çeşitli illerinde resmi bağımsız anaokulları ve ana sınıflarında çalışan 20 okul öncesi öğretmeninden oluşmaktadır. Araştırmaya katılan öğretmenler amaçlı örnekleme yöntemlerinden kolay ulaşılabılır durum örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak seçilmiştir. Araştırmanın veri toplama araçları öğretmen kişisel bilgi formu ve yarı

yapılandırılmış öğretmen görüşme formudur. Veri toplama araçları geliştirildikten sonra araştırma için gerekli etik izin alınmıştır. Verilerin toplanması sürecinde öğretmenlerle çevrimiçi görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın verileri içerik analiz tekniği ile analiz edilmiştir.

Bulgular

Araştırma sonucunda okul öncesi öğretmenlerin kapsayıcı eğitim sürecinde yaşadıkları sorunlar ve uygulamalara ilişkin elde edilen bulgular şunlardır:

- Öğretme sürecinde yaşanan sorunlar, sınıf yönetiminde yaşanan sorunlar ($f = 16$), eğitim ortamı ve materyallerden kaynaklanan sorunlar ($f = 12$), güvenlik önlemi alma ile ilgili sorunlar ($f = 9$), sınıf mevcudunun kalabalık olması ile ilgili sorunlar ($f = 7$), etkinlik planlamada yaşanan sorunlar ($f = 4$) ve değerlendirmede yaşanan sorunlardır ($f = 3$).
- Mesleki yetersizlikleri sebebiyle karşılaştıkları sorunlar, kapsayıcı eğitim konusunda deneyim eksikliği ($f = 6$), lisans eğitiminin teorik ağırlıklı olması ($f = 5$), özel eğitim konusunda yeterli eğitim almama ($f = 4$) ve lisans eğitiminde dezavantajlı grupla uygulamalı çalışmamadır ($f = 1$).
- Çocuklarla ilgili karşılaştıkları sorunlar, göçmen çocukların dil sorunlarının olması ($f = 9$), çocuğun tanılanma sürecinin uzun olması ($f = 2$), sınıfta tanı almamış çocukların olması ($f = 2$), dezavantajlı çocuklara bireysel eğitim vermekte zorlanması ($f = 2$) ve sosyo-ekonomik açıdan düşük düzeydeki ailelerin çocuklarının materyale erişim sorunlarının olmasıdır ($f = 1$).
- Yöneticiler ilgili karşılaştıkları sorunlar, öğretmenin karşılaştığı sorunlara yönelik destek olmama ($f = 5$), yöneticinin kapsayıcı eğitim ile ilgili mevzuata uymaması ($f = 4$) ve yöneticinin kapsayıcı eğitim konusundaki farkındalık ve bilgi eksikliğidir ($f = 4$).
- Mevzuatla ilgili yaşanan sorunlar, kapsayıcı eğitim sürecinde öğretmenleri destekleyecek farklı disiplinlerde çalışan profesyonel kadrolarının olmaması ve istihdam edilmemesi ($f = 3$), Rehberlik Araştırma Merkezi'nde çalışan özel eğitim öğretmenlerinin mesleki yeterliliklerinin olmaması ve denetlenmesi ile ilgili sorunlar ($f = 1$) ve kapsayıcı eğitim alan çocuğun kaynaştırma türü ve düzeyinden kaynaklı yasal düzenlemelerin yeterli olmamasıdır ($f = 1$).
- Çocuklara yönelik uygulamalar, etkinlikleri çocuğa görelilik ilkesine göre geliştirme ve uygulama ($f = 16$), kapsayıcı eğitimden faydalanan çocuğa duygusal ve psikolojik destek sağlama ($f = 6$), sınıfta farklılıklara saygı ile ilgili etkinlik yapma ($f = 5$) ve kapsayıcı eğitimden faydalanan çocuğa akran desteği sağlamadır ($f = 2$).
- Ailelere yönelik uygulamalar, velileri bilgilendirme, eğitime ve yönlendirme ($f = 4$) ve veli ziyaretidir ($f = 3$).
- Eğitim ortamına yönelik uygulamalar, sosyoekonomik açıdan dezavantajlı çocuğa materyal desteği sağlama ($f = 5$), eğitim ortamında gerekli fiziksel düzenlemeleri yapma ($f = 3$) ve kapsayıcı eğitimden faydalanan çocuğun ihtiyacına uygun materyal hazırlamadır ($f = 1$).

Tartışma, Sonuç ve Öneriler

Araştırmada öğretmenlerin yaşadığı sorunların başında öğrenme öğretme sürecinde yaşanan sorunlar yer almaktadır. Öğretmenler, özel gereksinimli, mülteci, sosyal-ekonomik açıdan dezavantajlı olma vb. durumlardan dolayı desteğe ihtiyacı olan çocuklar ve sınıftaki diğer çocukların ilgi ve ihtiyaçlarını aynı anda karşılayamadıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca bu durumun ve sınıfların kalabalık olmasının sınıf yönetimi becerilerinde zorlanmalarına neden olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Sınıf içinde öğretmenlere destek olacak bir personelin bulundurulması ve sınıf mevcutlarının düşürülmesi bu sorunu giderebilir.

Öğretmenlerin kapsayıcı eğitim konusunda kendilerini mesleki olarak yeterli hissetmedikleri ve lisans eğitimlerinde uygulamaya dönük yeterli eğitim almadıkları belirlenmiştir. Bu bulgu öğretmen yetiştirme programlarında özel gereksinimli çocuklar ve kaynaştırma dersleri bağlamında düzenlemelerin yapılmasını gerektirmektedir.

Yapılan çalışmada öğretmenlerin mülteci çocuklar ve aileleriyle dil ve iletişim sorunu yaşadıkları, ailelerin yeterince işbirliği yapmadıkları, aile katılım etkinliklerine gelmedikleri bulunmuştur. Kapsayıcı eğitim sürecinde ailelerin bu konuda bilinçlendirilmesi ve eğitilmesi gerekmektedir.

Araştırmaya katılan bazı öğretmenler, okul yöneticilerinin yeterli desteği göstermediklerini ve sınıfta bulunması gereken kaynaştırma öğrencisi sayısında yönetmeliğe uymadıklarını belirtmişlerdir. Ayrıca yöneticilerin kapsayıcı eğitim konusundaki farkındalık ve bilgi eksiklerinin sorun oluşturduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Bu bağlamda yöneticilerin kapsayıcı eğitim konusunda bilinçlendirilmesi gerekliliği ön plana çıkmaktadır.

Öğretmenler, kurumlarında kendilerine destek olacak özel eğitim öğretmeni gibi farklı disiplinlerde çalışan profesyonel kadroların olmamasını ve RAM'larda özel eğitim öğretmeni olarak farklı branştan mezun kişilerin çalışmasını kapsayıcı eğitim sürecinde mevzuattan kaynaklı yaşanan sorunlar olarak belirtmişlerdir. Ülkemizde kapsayıcı eğitim sürecinde bu konuda da gerekli tedbirlerin alınması gerekmektedir.

Araştırmadaki okul öncesi öğretmenlerin çocukların kapsayıcı eğitimden yararlanabilmesi için çocuklara, ailelere ve eğitim ortamına yönelik olmak üzere çeşitli uygulamalarda buldukları tespit edilmiştir. Bu bulgular öğretmenlerin kapsayıcı eğitimde farklı uygulamalara yer verdiklerini göstermektedir.

Araştırmanın sonuçlarından yola çıkılarak öğretmenlerin kapsayıcı eğitim konusundaki farkındalıkları arttırılarak, yetersizliklerinin giderilmesi ve olumlu tutum geliştirmeleri için etkili hizmet içi eğitimler verilmelidir. Öğretmen adaylarının kapsayıcı eğitimle ilgili uygulamalı deneyimler yaşamaları için lisans programları yeniden düzenlenmelidir. Kapsayıcı eğitime yönelik etkili bir politikanın multi-disipliner bir bakış açısı ile farklı kurum ve kuruluşlarla iş birliği yapılarak çeşitli çalışma ve projeler üretilerek oluşturulması gerekmektedir. Bu politika doğrultusunda mevcut okul öncesi eğitim programları revize edilmelidir.