

**PRESCHOOL TEACHER CANDIDATE’S ATTITUDES AND CONCERNS ABOUT
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION WHETHER THEY
TOOK SPECIAL COURSES OR NOT AT UNIVERSITY**

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Abstract

This research investigates whether taking special education courses affect the attitudes of preservice teachers towards inclusive education positively or not. Also, concerns of preservice teachers was measured after and before taking special education courses. This study was done to preschool senior, sophomore and freshmen students at Boğaziçi University. Results indicate that the significance difference exists between senior and freshmen, sophomore preservice teachers. Briefly, preservice teachers show more positive attitudes towards inclusive education after taking special education courses. However, there is no significant difference on concerns towards inclusive education between seniors and sophomore and freshmen interms of taking special education courses. This study suggests that if special education courses put in the curriculum of preservice teachers, the preservice teachers will show more positive attitude towards inclusion.

Introduction

The notion of inclusive education based on the rights of having a free and appropriate education in the least restricted environment for each child. Like normal developed children, handicapped children also need a good educational environment in terms of all development of them. The disabled children can improve their potential and skills with their peers in the regular schools. Also, the prejudice of not disabled children can be removed if handicapped children have a chance for inclusive education. Normal children can have an empathy for their disabled friends. So, disabled children can be accepted easier by others in the society and not disabled peer group. Inclusive education provides adaptation and changes in order to meet the needs of all children in the regular schools (Foreman, 2001; Loreman & Deppeler, 2001; Sailor & Skrtic, 1995). According to Bailey and Wolery (1992), if children attend to preschool education earlier, their skills and progress will be higher. For this reason, the inclusive education should not be ignored in preschool education too. Thus, this will provide the socialization and adaptation to the society easier.

Moreover, according to Kırcaali and İftar (1992), when children have special education services, their growth accelerates, their handicaps start to decrease and it helps to decrease the social and emotional problems of families. For all these reasons many countries make legislation to consolidate the place of inclusive education in the educational system.

Preparing preservice teacher for regular classes plays a significant role to remove their negative attitudes, prejudices and ideas towards inclusive education. The training courses are important to shape positive attitudes towards inclusion. If teachers show positive attitudes towards inclusive education, the practices in mainstream classes will be successful for all students (Hobbs and Westling, 1998; Wilczensi, 1992, 1995). Murphy (1996) stresses that if teachers graduate from university as having negative attitudes for inclusion, to change these

attitudes is very difficult. Namely, when a teacher has positive approach to mainstream education, the handicapped and normal children will feel free, secure and comfortable in this environment.

The positive attitudes can be prompted through training and shaping positive experiences with disabled students (Hobbs & Westling, 1998). This study gives data whether preservice teachers have had any special courses in the university and these courses whether changed their attitudes from negative to positive towards inclusive education and handicapped children.

According to Vuran (2005), teachers are generally negative towards inclusive education and disabled students do not have positive attitudes by their peers in Turkey. More than half of the teachers do not want to take disabled children to their classes (Sarı, 2007). According to Metin and Çakmak (1998), teachers perceive that inclusive means extra work or load for them.

Day by day the awareness of the importance of inclusive education increases in Turkey. In 2008 the Turkish Ministry of Education published a circular letter about the suggestions to teachers about the inclusive education for teachers. The Turkish Ministry of Education put their suggestions for the needs of disabled children according to disability types such as autism, hearing or visual disability in mainstream classes. It also determined what kinds of materials and tools disabled children should use in mainstream classes to make easier their lives and educational environment.

Literature Review

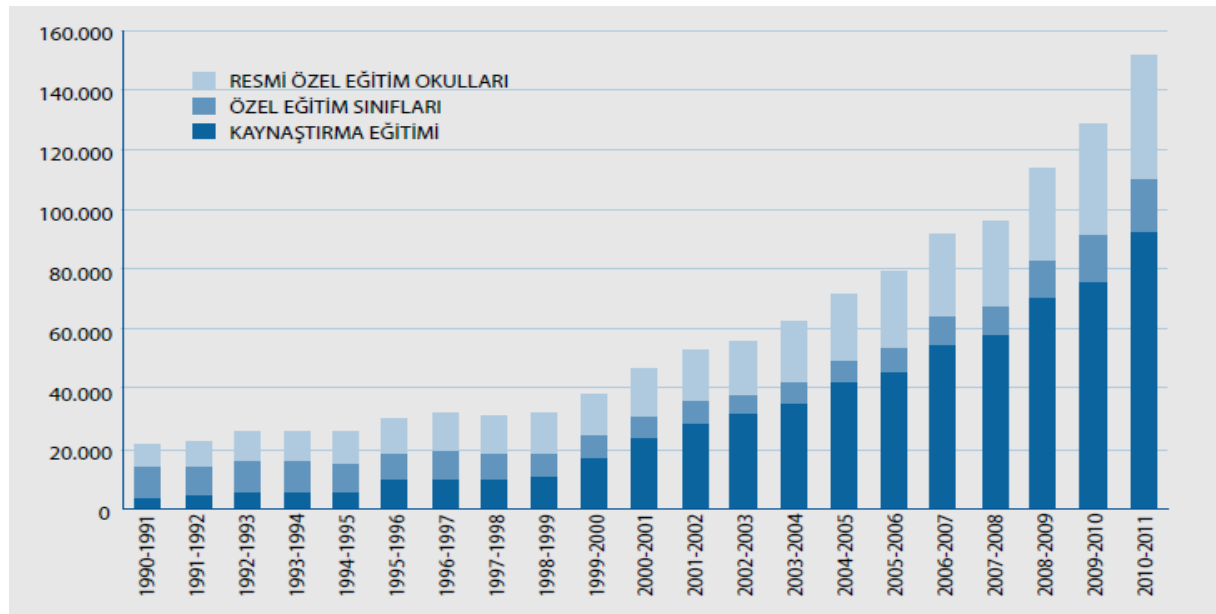
Inclusive Education

Inclusive education means providing 'belonging' (Kunc, 1992), i.e. by restructuring educational preparation for all children including disabled children in schools to feel the belonging themselves in the community.

Also, the mainstream classes are offered as a place for disabled children according to their needs and circumstances. If inclusive schooling is restructured properly, each school can accommodate each child without looking at his or her disability.

The principle of Turkish Ministry of National Education (2011) about the inclusive education and its application based on the requirement of continuity of special education together disabled children with their normal developed peers in general education classrooms.

This table shows with light blue the number of formal special education school numbers, with blue (in the middle) special education classrooms and with dark blue the number of students in inclusive education from the website of Ministry of Education, Special Education and Guidance Center, Statistics, 2011.



The table shows the number of mainstream classes and the number of children in inclusive education has continued to increase from 1990 to 2011.

The Numbers of Students and Classrooms in Special Education Classrooms and Inclusive Education, 2010-2011		
Education Type	Branch and Classroom Number	Student Numbers
Special Education Classroom	10.073	18.576 ³
Preschool Inclusive Education	288	588
Primary Inclusive Education	40.810	84.637 ⁴
Secondary Inclusive Education	4.573	7.775
Total	55.744	111.576

This table was taken from MEB ÖRGM, Statistics, 2011

Early intervention is a significant factor to provide the socialization and adaptation of children to the society (Cole, Dale, & Mills, 1991). However, for disabled children early education and preschool education services are limited to shape effective inclusion (Kırcaali-İftar 1998).

Avcı and Ersoy (1999), stressed that inclusive education in the preschool period effects disabled and normal developed children positively and this effect is focused on learning attitudes and interaction.

According to Artan and Balat (2003), the knowledge, emotions and skills of preschool teachers towards inclusive education are very significant because of their duty in mainstream and also the preschool education in the primarily institutions where disabled children can receive initial inclusive education.

Teachers believe that inclusive education is not beneficial because teachers have a lot of difficulties in practice and this situation makes many things more difficult for them (Uysal, 2003).

Attitudes of Preservice Teachers towards Inclusive Education

There is an arguing issue that the attitudes and beliefs of teachers are very important to ensure the achievement of inclusive education because the acceptance of the policy of inclusion of teachers can affect their commitments to implement it (Norwich, 1994).

Teachers' perceptions can be different in terms of these three dimensions which are physical and sensory, cognitive and behavioral- emotional.

Forlin (1995) discovered that teachers accepted cognitive disabled children cautiously, but they accepted physical disabled children easier. Also, Forlin's findings show that the severity of disability affects the attitudes of teachers. In the Clough and Lindsay (1991) study, many teachers thought that to meet the needs of children with emotional and behavioral difficulties is the most difficult. Children with learning difficulties follow the first group.

According to Sarı (2007), the attitudes of teachers are affected from such variables like their age, the type of child's handicap, the level of the handicap and their knowledge about inclusion and training courses they had.

Many studies (Vuran, 2005) in Turkey show that teachers have negative attitudes for mainstream and normally developed peers of disabled children do not have positive attitudes for handicapped children. Investigations in the education faculties of Turkish universities there currently are no courses on inclusive education to train preschool teachers (Gözüm and Yıkmiş, 2004).

According to this research, it can be told, in Turkey, the attitudes of teachers may be negative because a lot of teachers do not have the opportunity to attend the inclusive education courses.

The Differentiation between Preservice Teachers Who Had Special Education Courses or Not

When teachers have many contacts with disabled persons, their attitudes and ability to teach disabled children are influenced (Smith, Price and Marsh 1986). If teachers have a lot of knowledge about inclusive education and how their learning needs can be discussed, they can have less negative attitudes towards mainstream (Shoho, Katims and Wilks 1997).

To have successful inclusion outcomes, teachers must receive adequate preparation (Bender, Vail & Scott, 1995). Many studies have introduced that there is a relationship between the positive attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education (Fulk & Hirth, 1994; Gemmell-Crosby & Hanzlik, 1994). According to Bender et al., (1995) study, there is a positive correlation between the attitude of teachers and with the number of courses taken in teaching disabled children.

The experts (Yıkımlı, Şahbaz and Peker 1997; Sarı 2007) discovered that if teachers had information about inclusive education, their attitudes altered from negative to positive for inclusion.

The aim of this survey research to elucidate the attitudes of preschool preservice sophomore, freshmen, and senior student teachers towards inclusive education as taking into consideration whether they have taken special education courses. There are not many researches about whether there are any differences in terms of attitudes of preservice freshmen, sophomore and senior teachers in Turkey. For this reason, this research will give the answer to this issue that attitude of preschool preservice senior students are more positive

about inclusive education after taking special education courses than preservice sophomores and freshmen in Boğaziçi University.

Research Questions

Some research questions are mentioned as below when stating the purpose:

- Is inclusive education important for whole children?
- What are the attitudes of preservice teachers towards inclusion at Boğaziçi University?
- Do special education courses affect the attitudes of preservice teachers towards inclusive education?
- Is the concern rate of the preservice senior teachers who have taken the special education courses less than sophomores and freshmen?

In the light of these questions, whether special education courses affect the attitudes of preservice teachers or not towards to inclusive education, was studied by this research.

Method

Participants

Participants were a purposeful sample of Boğaziçi University (BU) preschool preservice freshman, sophomore and senior teachers who took and did not take special education courses and training. Senior preschool preservice students took special education courses, but preschool preservice sophomores and freshmen have not taken special courses.

There were total 42 preschool preservice teachers, 20 were seniors, 3 were sophomores and 19 were freshmen in this research.

Instruments

This research is a quantitative research with specific questions that do not have any open ended questions. There are three parts survey instruments in this research and they were applied to collect the data.

The first part searched the general demographic information about each participant. The second part included Concern about Integrated Education Scale (CIES). The third part included the Attitudes towards Inclusive Education scale (ATIES) (Wilczenski, 1992).

Part 1: Demographic Information

Part 2: Concern about Integrated Education Scale (CIES)

This scale was designed by Ummesh Sharma and Ishwar Desai in 2001. This scale has 21 items to measure the concerns of educators.

Each item is related to 4 point, but the item number was increased to 6 point because of the accordance with ATIES scale for this research. The type of questionnaire is Likert type. The items were ranked like this: 1 (Not concerned at all), 2 (A little concerned), 3 (Concerned sometimes), 4 (Concerned many times), 5 (Very concerned), 6 (Extremely concerned). Also, some questions were gotten out of scale because these questions were prepared for administrators whereas; this research was done for preschool preservice teachers.

Part 3: Attitudes towards Inclusive Education Scale (ATIES)

This scale was designed by Wilczenski in 1992, ATIES has 16 items to measure the attitudes of participants towards inclusion as looking at these parts: social, physical, academic and behavioral.

Each item was design as giving 6 point for Likert type scale. The items were ranked as starting from 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Disagree Somewhat), 4 (Agree Somewhat), 5 (Agree) to 6 (Strongly Agree) in this scale. If someone has higher score it means that showing more favorable attitudes. Attitudes towards Inclusive Education Scale

have been often used by researchers. Adequate reliability and validity was found (e.g. pasierb, 1994; Sharma, Ee & Desai, 2003; Wilczenski, 1995). This scale was adapted by obtaining permission from professor Wilczenski by email.

For all these scales, the permissions were taken by the designers of the scales to use them in this research to copy or adapt the scales.

Permissions

The permission was taken from Boğaziçi University Preschool Education Department and the Applied Research Course teacher to apply this questionnaire to seniors, freshmen and sophomores at Boğaziçi University. The Informed consent form which was given to preservice teachers is attached to Appendix A.

Data Analysis

The SPSS program was used to analyze the data for inputting, coding and analyzing the data. The descriptive statistics were used to explain the demographic information (e.g. whether preservice teacher took special education course or not). The correlation between attitudes and concerns of preservice teachers according to they took the special education courses or not. The Pearson Correlation and Independent t test were used for the analysis.

Procedure for Implementing the Scale

The self-administered questionnaire for the student teachers by researcher was applied to preservice sophomores, freshmen and seniors at Boğaziçi University during the seventh week of 2011 first semester. All preschool sophomores, freshmen and seniors were invited to participate in the study.

The Content Validity

The research course teacher examined the scale questions. Then it was permitted to apply the questionnaires to Boğaziçi University presechool preservice freshmen, sophomores and seniors. When it is looked that to other researches, it can be tell that this scales are appropriate and have content validity.

The Realibility of the Study

The first scale was developed to measure the concerns of preservice teachers. A test sample of preschool preservice teachers was asked to evaluate those concerns on likert scales which has 14 items about inclusive education concern. Initial scale items consisted of 1 (Not concerned at all), 2 (A little concerned), 3 (Concerned sometimes), 4 (Concerned many times), 5 (Very concerned), 6 (Extremely concerned). The Cronbach Alpha for these 14 items was .792. The second scale measures the attiitudes of preservice teacher towards inclusive education. A test of preschool preservice teachers was asked to evaluate those attitudes on Likert Scales which has 16 items. The second scale items consisted of 1 (Not concerned at all), 2 (A little concerned), 3 (Concerned sometimes), 4 (Concerned many times), 5 (Very concerned), 6 (Extremely concerned). The Cronbach Alpha for these 16 items was .867. In two questionnaires there are not any negative items.

Thus, these scale results and table below show that concern and attitude tests are reliable.

Reliability Statistics

Reliability	Concern test	Attitude test
Cronbach Alpha (item-total, item remain reliability)	0,792	0,867
Spearman- Brown (split- half reliability)	0,654	0,852
Number of Item	14	16

RESULT

Descriptive Statistics

Gender

There are 4 Male and 38 female in the research (*Figure 1*). It means that approximately 10% male and 90% female preservice teachers participated in this research.

(*Figure 1*)

Sex of Participants

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Male</i>	4	9,5
<i>Female</i>	38	90,5
<i>Total</i>	42	100

Grade of Participants

19 freshman, 3 sophomores and 20 seniors participated in this study (*Figure 2*). It means the approximately 48% preservice teachers have not taken special courses yet, 52% preservice teachers took it. Sophomores and freshmen have not taken the special education courses in the Boğaziçi University yet. However, seniors took this course.

(*Figure 2*)

The grade of the Participants

	Frequency	Percentage
Freshman	19	45,2
Sophomore	3	7,1
Senior	20	47,6
Total	42	100

Training Course Rate

In this research 40% of preservice teachers did not have training about special education. 31% of them had some training for it and 29% of them took training about special education (*Figure 3*).

(*Figure 3*)

Student How much Took Training about Special Education

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>None</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>40,5</i>
<i>Some</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>High least 40 hrs</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>28,6</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>100</i>

Contact with Disabled Children

In this research about 26% of preservice teachers did not have contact with disabled children, but 74% of them contacted with them (*Figure 4*).

(*Figure 4*)

Contact with Disabled Children

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Precentage</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>26,2</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>73,8</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>100</i>

Attitude and Concern Result

The Attitude mean is about 60 and the concern mean is 45 in this research.

Descriptive Statistic

	N	Mean
Scoreattitude	42	59,88
Scoreconcern	42	45,21
Valid N	42	

DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

Results indicate that the mean student have not taken the special education course concern score given to score concern source was ($M = 45,18$, $SD = 9,540$),

While the mean student took the special education course concern source was ($M = 45,25$, $SD = 11,652$). A one tailed independent groups t test indicated that the difference between these two means was not significant $t(40) = -0,21$, $p > .05$.

These results indicate that the null hypothesis is there between concerns and special education courses are taken or not.

Results indicate that the mean students have not taken special education course attitude score given to scoreattitude source was ($M = 55,95$, $SD = 11,150$), while the mean student took the special education course attitude source was ($M = 64,20$, $SD = 13,133$). A one tailed independent groups t test indicated that the differences between these two means was significant $t(40) = -2,200$, $p < .05$. The significance score is 0,034. It means that $0,034 < 0,05$.

These results indicate that there is a significant difference between preservice students who take the special education course or not. Senior preservice teachers have more positive attitudes than freshmen and sophomores.

Correlations between Scoreattitude and Scoreconcern

A series of Pearson correlations were calculated in order to determine the association among the variables. The participants' attitude scores were not related to their concern scores $r(5) = .189, p > .05$. Briefly, there is no statistically significant correlation between the attitudes and concern of preservice preschool teachers at Boğaziçi University.

Correlation

		Scoreconcern	Scoreattitude
Scoreconcern	Pearson Correlation	1	,189
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,230
	N	42	42
Scoreattitude	Pearson Correlation	,189	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,230	

DISCUSSION

In data analysis, firstly, it was found that there is a significant difference between senior preservice teachers who took special education courses and freshmen, sophomore preservice teachers who did not take special education courses in terms of attitude towards inclusive education. It can be said that the special education courses affect the ideas of preschool preservice teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. It means that the senior preservice teachers at Boğaziçi University; after taking special education courses; they have more positive ideas towards inclusive education. However, sophomores and freshmen have less positive ideas than seniors about inclusive education.

Also, when looking at the results (.469 for attitude and .966 for concern scores), it can be said that having contact with disabled people did not create a significant difference in

terms of attitudes and concerns towards inclusive education. Briefly, this result is parallel with all articles and other research results about attitudes towards inclusive education. It can be said that special education courses at universities should be taught as compulsory courses.

However, when the concern results were examined, there was not a significant difference between senior, sophomore and freshmen preservice teachers in terms of concerns towards inclusive education. It means that although senior, sophomore and freshmen preservice teachers take special education course; it does not affect their concern about inclusive education.

Also, when the results were examined, there was no correlation between the attitudes and concerns of senior, sophomore and freshmen preservice teachers towards inclusive education.

If special education courses can be put in curriculum at universities in the future it will increase the awareness and positive attitudes towards inclusive education. Presevice teachers will have a lot of information about disabled children and how teachers should behave them properly, how they manage the classroom if they have a child who needs special education in the classroom, what they can do for disabled children's development and building a caring environment, how they balance the relationship between normal developed and disabled children and how they can shape an environment where disabled children and normal children can live peacefully. There are many other reasons to put special education courses at university as compulsory. Thus, each disabled will have a chance to have more equal environment and education like non disabled children.

Limitation of the Research

The results could not be compared to learn whether there is a differences towards inclusive education between senior, sophomore and freshmen preschool preservice teachers in

terms of gender. Since the number of male participants was just four. Also, this research was done among just Boğaziçi preschool preservice teachers. Namely, the participant population was limited. Totally 42 participants participated in this study.

Suggestions for Further Research

- The male and female number should be equal. Hence, the differences could be compared between gender.
- The number of students could be more to look at the attitude and concern differences.
- The students' answer could be compare if students from other department attend the study.
- Also, other universities could be added to this research in İstanbul to look at the differences among universities and preservice teachers.
- The other positive effects of taking special courses on preservice teachers could be searched.

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