



Chapter 10

A Systematic Review of the Literature on the Problems and Suggestions for Inclusive Education in Turkey


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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education, without excluding anyone regardless of his/her physical features, gender, or any other reasons, is considered a powerful instrument in achieving an inclusive society. The study aims to investigate the literature on inclusive education in K-12 classes in Turkey. In the study, document analysis method, one of the qualitative research designs, was adopted. The data were collected online via typing variations of the key words “problems, suggestions of inclusive education in Turkey” into several databases including Google Scholar, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, ERIC, and the search engine of the Higher Education Institution’s thesis archive for the years of 2009-2022. The results have revealed that there are needs for a better inclusive education in Turkey, such as improving of educational facilities and reducing class sizes, developing inclusive education policies and approaches, increasing the quantity and quality of special education personnel, and more financial support.

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive activities in a particular society are closely interconnected with the attitude of that community (Sorkos, 2020). The main effective educational sources of a community are well educated teachers. Majority of schools cannot enroll students with special needs due to not having teachers skillful at implementing special education requirements in educational activities (Buchner & Thompson, 2021). Therefore, in the teacher education programs, inclusive education courses may play a significant role to increase awareness about inclusive activities in a society in every means of activities from educational to social activities (Lancaster & Brain, 2007; Loreman & Earle, 2007). There are various definitions of inclusion, which has been discussed and accepted recently in the contemporary world, stemming from the principle of equality in education, which is a requirement of democratization, and the view that individuals should be educated in the least restrictive environment. The goal of inclusion is to educate children with special needs alongside their peers in normal education settings by providing additional educational services to meet the requirements of the children. Inclusion; it envisages that individuals with special needs should be placed in normal school programs as much as possible, depending on the type and degree of their needs and the opportunities provided by the resources to be used, and they should be educated together with their peers in equal educational conditions (Karacaoglu, 2008). Like individuals without special needs designations, individuals with special needs have the right to have the equal opportunities in education. Education of individuals with special needs can be carried out in two ways; one of them is separate education and the other is inclusive education. Separate education is carried out by special education personnel and programs developed taking into account the disability situation. Inclusive education, on the other hand, is the education of individuals with special needs and normal development in the same class by normal classroom teachers (Batu et al., 2005).

Giving people with special needs the knowledge and skills they require through special needs education is another crucial element in enabling them to live independently in social situations (Eripek, 2003). For the education of students with special needs, the least restrictive educational setting is advised. By placing kids in this learning setting with their chronological age peers, it is intended to best suit their requirements (Kircaali-iftar, 1998). According to Mitchell (2004), policies that promote inclusive education allow all students to be treated equally regardless of their level of functioning or other personal traits. In its broadest sense, inclusive education refers to “education for all,” including people from disadvantaged backgrounds including poverty, racial and ethnic minorities, rural areas, and other groups. According to Singh (2009), inclusive education is largely about “belonging, membership, and acceptance” both philosophically and practically (p. 13). Villa and Thousand (2000) added to this issue by arguing that building an atmosphere that promotes and includes all learners is the foundation of high-quality education rather than solely relying on student placement.

The Salamanca Statement (1994) of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which describes inclusive education from the standpoint of the United Nations (UN), plays a significant role in Turkey’s inclusion education initiatives. Although its emphasis on children’s rights and perspective is rooted in earlier declarations, the Salamanca Statement has also had the greatest impact on educational practices globally. According to UNESCO’s definition, inclusive education is primarily concerned with concerns of human rights, equality, and the fight for a society devoid of discrimination. According to the Salamanca Statement, UNESCO’s role as the principal leader is to:

1. ensure that special needs education is discussed in every forum that deals with education for all;

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