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The Opinions of Classroom Teachers and Normally Developing Children on Inclusive Practice

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigating the opinions of elementary classroom teachers and children with normal levels of development in whose classes children with special needs were also present. The researchers conducted interviews with 10 teachers who worked at elementary schools affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in Edirne province and whose classes included both children with special needs and 10 children who registered normal levels of development attending the same classes. In the study, a phenomenological qualitative research design was used, the data of which were collected through interviews and analyzed employing content analysis. The results revealed that both the classroom teachers and the students were not adequately knowledgeable on the subject of inclusion. The majority of the teachers stated that children with special needs and normally-developing children were similar as the activities they both enjoyed were common, that children with special needs who had mild disabilities could benefit more from inclusive education, and that they mainly required support from special education teachers and families during inclusive practice. During inclusive practice, most of the teachers experienced difficulties with behavioral problems with the children with special needs, and with issues regarding lessons and social acceptance. As a solution, the teachers suggested the provision of special educational support. Furthermore, the study revealed that half of the children participating in the study did not play with the children with special needs, and that almost none of the children mentioned the children with special needs when questioned about the classmates they liked the most and the least.

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Keywords:
Inclusion, classroom teacher, children with special needs, inclusive practice

Introduction

Inclusive education is defined and used with different meanings attributed by different people in various disciplines. In the broadest sense, inclusive education is defined as the education of children with special needs and normally developing children in the same classroom (Osborne and Dimattia, 1994). Another definition of inclusive education is that of placing children with disabilities in regular or general education classrooms with the aim of providing instruction and securing appropriate support (Lerner, 2000).

For the successful implementation of inclusive education, key responsibility lies with classroom teachers. Teachers in inclusive classrooms should be willing to implement inclusion strategies, and show themselves accepting of children with disabilities, in their classrooms (Aral, 2011; Batu, 2000; Kargın, 2006). In the 26 studies they reviewed with regard to for the attitudes of classroom teachers towards inclusive education, De Boer, Pijl and Minnaert (2011) reported that the majority of teachers held neutral or negative attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special needs in general education classrooms, and that none of the studies drew clear and positive conclusions with regard to the issue. Moreover, they found that the type of disability related to teachers' attitudes, and that teachers viewed the inclusion of children with

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learning disabilities and behavioral problems negatively. Another study revealed that teachers were more willing to include children with mild disabilities or physical disabilities than those with more complex needs (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002).

There are several studies dealing with teachers' attitudes towards inclusive practice (Babaoğlan and Yılmaz, 2010; Demir and Açar, 2011; Saraç and Çolak, 2012). Various studies on the subject reported that classroom teachers did not consider themselves qualified for or adequately knowledgeable about inclusive practice (Babaoğlan and Yılmaz, 2010; Cawthon, 2001; Kargın, Acarlar, and Sucuoğlu, 2003; Sadioğlu, Bilgin, Batu, and Oksal, 2013; Yıldırım Erişkin, Yazar Kıraç, and Ertuğrul, 2012), that they experienced difficulties in issues such as time management (Saraç and Çolak, 2012; Vural and Yıkmış, 2008), classroom management (Çankaya and Korkmaz, 2012; Demir and Açar, 2011; Kargın, Acarlar and Sucuoğlu, 2003; Sadioğlu et al., 2013), and communication/cooperation with families (Demir and Açar, 2011; Sadioğlu, Batu and Bilgin, 2012; Slobodzian, 2009), that they did not benefit from adequate support services during inclusive practice (Çankaya and Korkmaz, 2012; Demir and Açar, 2011; Kargın et al., 2003; Sadioğlu, et al., 2012), and that they required counseling services and in-service training for effective inclusive practice (Myles and Simpson, 1989).

Another study examining the attitudes towards inclusion revealed that time was the most significant area of concern reported by the participants. The teachers indicated that they did not have adequate time to consult with other teachers and specialists working with special needs students, to attend meetings concerning their special needs students, and to undertake the responsibility to educate special needs students in regular classrooms (Santoli, Sachs, Romey and McClurg, 2008).

In addition to teachers, normally developing children also exert a significant influence on inclusive education. Alquraini and Gut (2012) reported that peer support was an important factor for successful inclusion. However, due to behavioral problems observed in children with special needs; normally developing children have difficulty accepting children with special needs; generally ostracizing them or acting indifferently towards them (Gottlieb and Semmel, 1980; Gresham, 1982). In a study investigating the social participation of students with special needs, the researchers determined that students with special needs had a significantly lower number of friends, were rarely members of a peer group and, had fewer interactions with their classmates while experiencing greater interactions with their teachers, and were less accepted, in comparison to normally-developing students (Koster, Pijl, Nakken and Houten, 2010).

One of the critical issues in the inclusion of special needs children is that of the behavioral problems observed in children. Behavioral problems present a significant obstacle for effective inclusion (Klein, Cook and Richardson Gibbs, 2001). In a study conducted to determine the opinions of normally-developing children regarding inclusive practice, normally-developing children stated children with special needs disrupted the classes, distracted them and decreased the average academic achievement of the class (Turhan, 2007). Krull, Wilbert and Henneman (2014) revealed that students with classroom behavior problems and learning difficulties experienced greater levels of social rejection and were less popular in comparison to normally-developing students. Baydık and Bakkaloğlu (2009) revealed that social acceptance of children with special needs was associated with academic competence, physical appearance and problematic behavior. Another study investigating the relationship between children's behavior and peer preference reported that aggression, withdrawal, and inattentive and hyperactive behaviors affected peer preference negatively whereas prosocial behavior affected peer preference positively (Stormshak, Bierman, Bruschi, Dodge and Coie, 1999).

Limited mobility and cognitive skills in children with special needs restrict their ability to play imaginative and collaborative games with other children. This situation makes the child with special needs less attractive as a playmate for normally developing children (Diamond, Le Furgu, and Blass, 1991). In the study carried out by Girli and Atasoy (2012), children with special needs attending inclusive classrooms stated they were isolated, not preferred in games and labelled problem children. Another study revealed that children with special needs enjoyed a lower social status than their peers in general education classes, and that they scored significantly lower than their peers, especially in best friend nominations and social preferences (Estell, Jones, Pearl, Acker, Farmer and Rodkin, 2008). Frederickson and Furham (2001) determined that children with special needs experienced greater levels of rejection compared to normally

developing children. Avramides (2010), Frederickson and Furnham (2004), Pijl and Frostrad (2010) found similar results in their studies.

These studies show that lack of adequate educational support services and failure to prepare children with disabilities and teachers for inclusive education may result in numerous problems. Classroom teachers experience problems in the inclusion of children with disabilities and have difficulty in finding solutions due to the lack of support services and training on the subject. In addition, past research conducted in Turkey concerning inclusion mostly focused on the opinions of teachers with only a limited number of studies investigating the opinions of normally-developing children especially in conjunction with the opinions of teachers. The researchers believe it is important to carry out an evaluation of inclusion from the perspective of both these groups. In this context, in order to determine their opinions and to provide suggestions for conducting quality preparatory studies on inclusive education, there is a need for greater emphasis to be placed on the opinions of both classroom teachers and normally developing children regarding inclusive practice. Furthermore, determining the opinions of classroom teachers and normally developing children is critical in the taking of necessary measures to ensure a successful inclusive practice. Based on this necessity, the aim of this study was to determine, and to provide suggestions in respect of, the opinions of elementary classroom teachers and normally-developing children who found themselves paced next to children with special needs in their classrooms regarding inclusive practice, and to raise awareness on inclusive education.

Method

In the study, a phenomenological qualitative research design was employed, as the researchers aimed to research the opinions of elementary classroom teachers and normally-developing children who had special needs children in their classes examining inclusive practice through their own explanations, perceptions and examples. Phenomenological design focuses on phenomena people are aware of without possessing an in-depth and detailed understanding. The interview technique was used as the data collection tool, since the study was based on a phenomenological design model. In ascertaining the experiences and meanings related to the phenomena under discussion, the interview technique grants the researcher opportunities for interaction, flexibility and probing through the use of follow-up questions (Yildirim and Simsek, 2011).

Participants

The study group selected using the criterion sampling method, which constitute a purposeful sampling method, comprised of 10 teachers who were employed in the first, second and third grades of elementary schools in the city center district of Edirne and who had children with special needs in their classes, and 10 normally-developing children attending the same classes. The criterion sampling method involves studying all cases that meet a series of predetermined criteria. The criterion or criteria mentioned herein could be developed by the researcher or a prearranged list of criteria could be used (Yıldırım and Simsek, 2011). For teachers, the criteria used in the selection were teaching in the first, second or third grades of elementary school and having at least one child with special needs in their classrooms, while, for normally developing children, the criteria were not having a disabled family member, and having a classmate with special needs for a minimum of two years. In addition, voluntary participation was a selection criterion for both groups.

All of the teachers participating in the study were aged 36 or older. Six of the teachers were female, while four were male. Four of the teachers held four-year university degrees, and six held two-year associate degrees. The number of teachers who had been teaching to the same class for the past one, two and three years were five, four and one; respectively. Furthermore, two teachers had been teaching at the same school for two years and less, one teacher for six-ten years, three teachers for eleven-fifteen years, and four teachers for sixteen years or more. Nine of the teachers were employed full-time whereas one worked part-time. Five teachers had 26-30 students in their classrooms, two teachers had 21-25 students, one teacher had 31 or more students, one teacher had 16-20 students, and one teacher had 10-15 students. Nine of the teachers had one included students included in the study in their classrooms, and one teacher had two students. None of the teachers had attended any courses on inclusive education in university. In addition, five of the teachers had attended in-service training courses on inclusive education while five teachers had not, and only three of the teachers had prior experience with people with disabilities while seven teachers had none.

The number of children attending the first (7 years-old), second (8 years-old) and third (9 years-old) grades was five, four and one, respectively. Seven children were female and three were male. Three of the children did not have any siblings, while seven children had two-three siblings. Six of the children were firstborn, while four were lastborn. In addition, the mothers of four of these children were aged 26-35 and six of these children had mothers aged 36-45, while the fathers of two of these children were aged 26-35 and eight of these children had fathers aged 36-45. The number of mothers who held elementary school, middle school and university degrees was three, four and three respectively, while it was one, six and three respectively for the fathers. Eight of the mothers were housewives, one was a civil servant, and one was a worker. With the exception of one child, the children's families consisted solely of the children, their parents and siblings, and their families did not have any members with disabilities.

Data Collection

In the study, as the researchers attempted to reveal in detail the perceptions of the teachers and normally-developing children regarding inclusion, the semi-structured interview technique was preferred for the purpose of the collection of data within the scope of a basic interpretive qualitative research pattern.

"The Information Form for the Opinions of Classroom Teachers and Normally Developing Children" developed by the researchers for data collection purposes was used in the study. The first section of the teachers' form consisted of two sections comprising of questions on the age, gender, educational background, period of service and employment status of the teacher, as well as, the number of children in the class, whether he/she had attended any university courses or in-service training on inclusive education, and whether he/she had any prior experience with people with disabilities. In the second section of the interview form, the researchers tried to ascertain through semi-structured interviews their opinions regarding the disability groups that could benefit from inclusion, the types of support they needed and the difficulties they experienced with regard to inclusive practice, and their suggestions for solutions.

The children's form consisted of questions on the grades the children participating in the study attended, age, gender, number of siblings and birth order, in addition to the parents' ages and educational backgrounds, mothers' occupation, whether there were any other family members in the household other than the parents and the children, and whether anyone in the family had disabilities. In the second section of the interview form, the researchers attempted to ascertain the opinions of normally-developing children on the school life of the child with special needs through semi-structured interviews.

The questions in the forms were reviewed by two professors working in the field of child development, an assessment and evaluation expert and a statistician. The questions submitted for expert debriefing were evaluated by the experts as suitable, partially suitable or unsuitable with respect to the aim of the study and the clarity of the questions. The questions deemed suitable by the experts were used as is, whereas the questions the experts deemed partially suitable were amended according to their suggestions. The majority of the experts deemed none of the questions unsuitable; therefore, there were no questions that were excluded from the forms.

Data Collection and Analysis

The research data was collected in April-May of 2012 through semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers who have children with special needs in their classrooms and normally developing children attending the same classrooms in elementary schools in Edirne province. All interviews with the teachers and the children were conducted by the researchers at their schools, in quiet rooms and at their convenience. Prior to the interviews, the researchers briefly explained the aim of the study to the participants; then asked the questions included in the form and recorded their answers with their consent. During the interviews, the participants' names were used; however, thereafter each participant was designated with a code as T1, T2, …, T10 for the teachers and C1, C2, …, C10 for the children. Data collection took approximately 30 minutes. Following the completion of data collection, the researchers analyzed the research data using content analysis, a qualitative data analysis method (Yıldırım and Simsek, 2011).

During data analysis, the researchers printed out the data in the interview forms without any modification to the voice recordings; thereby, converting the digital recordings into written text. The written data were read and evaluated individually. The evaluation data were coded by subject. Due to the lack of a

code list on the subject in the literature, the coding was carried out according to the concepts derived from the study data. The researchers tried to identify the similarities between the codes developed for each interview question and organized the codes into themes. The themes developed were reorganized after simplification and consolidation in collaboration with an associate specialized in the area, and systematically analyzed.

In qualitative studies, directly quoting the interviewees and interpreting the results based on these quotes is fundamental to ensuring the validity of the research (Yıldırım and Simsek, 2011). Therefore, in the present study, the interviewees were quoted directly and the results were interpreted based on these quotes.

The reliability study was conducted by the researchers in collaboration with a domain expert by comparing the encodings. The formula (Reliability = Number of Agreements / Total Number of Agreements and Disagreements) suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) was used to determine inter-rater reliability. The reliability of the study according to this formula was computed as 90%.

Findings

The study results were presented in an integrated form and without distinction as the opinions of the teachers and normally-developing children. The opinions on the concept of inclusion were explained in respect of the opinions of both groups. The problems experienced in inclusive practice and the suggestions for solution, as well as, the types of support needed and the disability groups to be introduced to inclusive practice were presented in accordance with the information gathered from the teachers. The opinions on the classroom behavior of the children with special needs were evaluated in view of the opinions of their peers.

The Meaning of inclusion. The question "*In your opinion, what is inclusion?*" was asked in order to understand what the concept of inclusion meant for the teachers. Four of the teachers replied that it meant education in the same environment, four said it signified children with special needs, and two said that it had the meaning of normalization.

T8 stated his opinion on the subject as "Children below the overall level of the class being educated in the same environment as his peers," while T2 said "Children who are below the levels of knowledge, behavior and learning of normal children," and T7 said "Normalization of the child with disabilities among normal children."

The question "*When you hear of inclusion, what comes to mind?*" was asked to understand what inclusion meant for the children. Four of the children participating in the study said friendship, one child said planets and dinosaurs, and another said buffer letters*, whereas four children said nothing came to mind.

On the subject, C3 stated "Friendship, mate(s); friends who are cross with each other and who should be reconciled," C4 said "Buffer letters,* "Y" is a buffer letter in the word 'sobaya'," and C9 said "Exploring the planets comes to mind, and investigating where dinosaurs live."

*The Turkish translations of the terms *Inclusion* and *Buffer* in the phrase "Buffer Letters" are homonyms. The child gives an example of the usage of buffer letters. Turkish makes use of the three buffer letters (-n- -y- -s-) when adding suffixes beginning with a vowel to root words ending with a vowel; thus, separating vowels to prevent diphthong formation.

Disability groups that could benefit from inclusive education. The teachers were then asked which disability groups could benefit from inclusive practice. Seven teachers said students with orthopedic impairments, five teachers said students with mild mental disabilities, three teachers said students with mild hearing impairments, and two teachers said those with mild hyperactivity. T8 expressed his opinion on the subject as "Physically or mentally disabled students whose disabilities are not severe. It seems there isn't a better place for them to be educated," T9 said "Students with mild learning disabilities and those with orthopedic impairments. These children with disabilities could adjust to the class, whereas others could hinder class activities." Moreover, one of the teachers said students with social phobias, while another said students with speech impediments.

Opinions of the teachers on the types of support they required in inclusion. The teachers were asked about the types of support they needed with regard to inclusive practice. The majority of the teachers (8

teachers) stated they needed the support of a specialist, whereas seven teachers said they needed the support of the families during inclusive practice.

T2 stated "I would like to be trained and informed by specialists. Perhaps a one-week in-service training could be provided," and T6 said "I need the support of a special education teacher," emphasizing specialist support, whereas T7 said "The support of the family is critical; the child succeeds and improves if the family is attentive," and T5 said "I need the support of the families," asserting the significance of family support.

One of the remaining four teachers stressed the support of the school administration, another stated the support of normally developing children, another said the support of an in-class assistant teacher, and another pointed out the requirement for a resource room.

Critical problems the teachers experienced in inclusion and their solution suggestions. The teachers were requested to relate the most important problems they experienced in inclusion, and to provide solution suggestions to these problems. The problems they experienced in inclusion were the number of children in the class, behavioral problems, difficulty with lessons, and lack of time, acceptance of the child with special needs, lack of knowledge and classroom management. T6 said "He could not adjust to the class, his classmates did not accept him," emphasizing peer rejection, and T8 said "It is not always possible to care for her on a one-on-one basis; there isn't enough time," stressing the lack of time. T4 emphasized the lack of knowledge by saying "Teachers don't know how to help these children," while T1 emphasized behavioral problems by saying "He is not able to control his behaviors. He makes meaningless sounds," and T5 stressed problems with classroom management by saying "She distracts other students, making it more difficult for me to teach."

The majority of the teachers participating in the study suggested as solutions: educational support, acceptance of the child with special needs by the parents and the teacher, teaching other students about inclusion, reducing the number of children in the class, implementing partial inclusion instead of full inclusion, and educating children with special needs in a separate environment.

T10 expressed her opinion on the subject as "First of all, the parents should accept and get to know the child. They don't know much about their children's disabilities." Three of the teachers suggested educating children with special needs in a separate environment. Another teacher stressed teaching normally-developing students about inclusion.

The school life of children with special needs. The normally-developing children were asked how the child with special needs behaved in the classroom. The children said that noticeable behaviors were the attempts of the included child tried to leave the classroom, the 'picking on' of his/her friends, wandering about the classroom, and the carrying out of reading and writing activities, and supervision of them.

On the above-mentioned subject, C9 said "He immediately puts his bag down and keeps standing. The teachers have a hard time making him sit down. He tries to run away," while C5 said "He walks around a lot. He doesn't even listen to the class president," C8 said "She spends recess with my teacher. She goes out during recess. And she writes in her notebook sometimes," C4 said "When the teacher tells her to do something, she tries to do it immediately," C10 said "He watches us, observes what we are doing," and C9 said "He always walks around. The teacher sits him down with difficulty. He walks around almost the whole classroom, and distracts us."

The children were then question about the games they played with the children with special needs. Three of the children mentioned *Spud*/*Stop* and *Dodgeball*, two children stated *Off the Ground*, one child said *Tag*, one child *Blind Man's Bluff*, one child *Charades*, one child *Jump Rope*, and another said the *Circle Game*, while five of the children stated they did not play with the special needs children.

When the children participating in the study were asked for the names of three classmates they liked the most, only one child gave the name of the child with special needs; whereas when they were asked for the names of three classmates they disliked, four of the children offered the name of the child with special needs. When they were inquired as to why they disliked the child with special needs, C5 replied "He swears -excessively," while C6 said "He always misbehaves when the teacher is gone. The teacher leaves the

classroom for one minute and he creates a ruckus. The teachers understandably get angry," C7 said "He does many things to us; pricks needles, spits, messes with our bags, throws our wallets out the window. And he throws rocks at us and sometimes kicks us," and C1 said "She is lazy. She left the school. She runs away because she yells at us a lot, makes us crazy and we call her names. She calls her sister for everything. She comes and says 'Nobody touches this girl. If you touch her, I'll kill you,' Even if we yell or make her fall down."

Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions

This study was aimed at determining the opinions of teachers, who were employed at the first, second and third grades of elementary schools in Edirne city center and had children with special needs in their classrooms, and 10 normally-developing children attending the same classrooms, with regard to the issue of inclusion.

The teachers interviewed stated that the term 'inclusion' conjured up images of education in the same environment, children with special needs, and normalization while the children said they thought of friendship, planets and dinosaurs, and buffer letters. Both the teachers and the students failed to explain inclusion, and were not sufficiently knowledgeable on the subject. However, inclusion is defined as placing children with disabilities in regular or general education classrooms for instruction and providing appropriate support (Lerner, 2000). This could be due to the fact that the teachers had not been educated or trained on the issue, and the students had not been informed, on the subject. In their study on the competence of classroom teachers in inclusive education Babaoglan and Yılmaz (2010), revealed that teachers lacked adequate knowledge and qualifications regarding inclusive education. Furthermore, another study reported that teachers' knowledge on inclusion was inadequate (Kargın et al., 2003).

The teachers opined that students with mild learning disabilities, mental disabilities, hearing impairment, hyperactivity, and orthopedic impairments could benefit from inclusive practice. Avramidis and Norwich (2002) reported that teachers were more willing to include students with mild disabilities or physical disabilities than those with more complex needs. In this case, it is possible to say that teachers do not prefer children who require more responsibilities in inclusive practice.

A general evaluation of the types of support the teachers required in inclusion shows that the majority of the teachers stated they needed specialist support (8 teachers) and family support (7 teachers). Other types of support deemed necessary were the support of the school administration and the classmates, and the presence of a resource room. Sadioglu et al. (2013) similarly reported that teachers mainly required specialist support. In addition, some of the teachers emphasized the support of the family. Moreover, Alquraini and Gut (2012) emphasized the support of normally-developing children as the most critical factor in the successful inclusion of special needs students. The limited quantity and quality of teachers and the lack of special educators to support teachers augments the significance of family support, factor that could have contributed to the teachers' demands for family support.

Behavioral problems were the most significant issue the teachers experienced in inclusion. In another study, behavioral problems were similarly identified as one of the problems teachers encountered during inclusion (Sadioglu et al., 2012). This might be due to the teachers' failure to implement effective classroom management strategies in their classes. The second most common problem the teachers experienced was the failure of classmates' and parents' to accept the child with special needs. This might be been due to the fact that neither the children nor the families were readied for inclusion. Problems with lessons and time were among the difficulties the teachers encountered. Problems with lessons might have due to the teachers' deficiency in making instructional adjustments appropriate to the characteristics and needs of all the students in the class, and, as a result, a failure to draw the attention of the students to the lessons. Vural and Yikmis (2008) similarly reported that most of the teachers complained of the lack of time, and a deficit of knowledge regarding instructional adjustment. Another study on the attitudes towards inclusion revealed time was the greatest concern emphasized by the teachers (Santoli et al., 2008). The teachers also complained about the class size. The number of classes where the number of students were 10-15, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30, and 31 and over were 1, 1, 2, 4, and 1 classes; respectively. Considering the lack of assistant teachers to support the classroom teachers, these numbers were high. In addition, various studies have reported similar results (Çankaya and Korkmaz, 2012; Demir and Acar, 2011; Vural and Yikmis, 2008).

The majority of the teachers stressed educational support as a proposed solution to the problems they experienced. Other suggestions were ensuring parental and peer acceptance of children with special needs, informing normally developing children on the subject, reducing the number of students in the class, implementing partial inclusion instead of full inclusion, and educating children with special needs in a separate environment. In the study by Sadioglu et al., (2013), teachers similarly recommended separate environments, the provision of quality and effective in-service training, reducing class size, and the provision of support material. Furthermore, in the study conducted by Sarac and Colak (2012), teachers suggest to the Ministry of National Education the provision of in-service training, the assignment of two counsellors to each school, and the education of children with special needs in separate schools and classrooms, while they suggested organizing informative activities for the parents, a more active guidance and counselling service, smaller class sizes, and in-school training programs to the school administration. Evaluation of past research reveals one of the most critical problems in inclusion is that neither teachers nor children with special needs are provided with educational support. Consequently, classroom teachers experience significant difficulties involving the education of children with disabilities during inclusion.

With regard to the conduct of what the child with special needs in the classroom, some of the students stated the child with special needs participated in class activities, whereas some spoke of behavioral problems of the child with special needs during lessons. Turhan (2007) similarly reported that normally developing children stated that children with special needs disrupted the lessons and distracted them. Problems experienced during lessons could have resulted from the teachers' deficiency in making instructional adjustments appropriate to the characteristics and needs of all the students in the class. In their study conducted with teachers and school administrators, Kargın, Acarlar and Sucuoglu (2003) revealed that the majority of school principals were not adequately knowledgeable, and did not make the necessary adjustments to accommodate children with special needs, or prepare the teachers and other students for inclusion. Furthermore, Vural and Yikilmis(2008) reported that most of the teachers complained of the lack of time allocated to and knowledge regarding instructional adjustment. However, inclusive practice can succeed only through the provision of necessary adjustments to normal educational environments and a full range of support services.

With regard to the games students participating in the study played with the special needs children, half (5) of the normally developing children said they did not play with the children with special needs. Similarly, Girli and Atasoy (2012) found that children with special needs were isolated, not preferred in games and labelled 'problem children'. Koster et al., (2010) revealed that children with special needs had a significantly lower number of friends and were less accepted than normally-developing children. In addition, children with special needs were not preferred in collaborative activities and were perceived to have adjustment and communication issues (Kabasakal et al., 2008). Furthermore, Krull et al., (2014) reported that students with classroom behavior problems and learning difficulties experienced greater levels of social rejection and were less popular; in comparison to normally developing students.

Scarcely any of the students mentioned the child with special needs when asked to name the classmates they liked the most and the least. Only one of the students mentioned the child with special needs among the three classmates he liked the most, and three students named the children with special needs among the three classmates they disliked. Estell et al. (2008) found that children with special needs had a lower social status than their peers in general education classes and that they scored much lower in social preference. Frederickson and Furham (2001) revealed that special needs children experienced greater levels of rejection compared to normally developing children. Avramides (2010), Frederickson and Furnham (2004), Pijl and Frostrad (2010) reported similar results in their studies. Furthermore, another study conducted by Guleryuz (2009) showed children attending inclusive education had various problems with their peers, had difficulty forming relationships and could not fully express themselves. This situation might be due to the fact that neither the normally-developing children nor the children with special needs were readied for inclusion. Several studies revealed that informing normally-developing children about children with special needs attending inclusive classes increased the social acceptance levels of children with special needs (Aktas and Kucuker, 2002; Sahbaz, 2007).

In line with the study results, the suggestions of the researchers are as follows:

Teachers, normally developing children and parents could be informed about special education and inclusive practice prior to its implementation by organizing interactive meetings.

More effective and efficient in-service training seminars on the adjustment of educational environment, developing individual curricula, and classroom management could be organized for classroom teachers who have children with special needs in their classes.

Support services for special education such as resource rooms, in-class assistance and special education counseling could be provided to teachers, children with special needs and normally-developing children at schools where inclusive practice is implemented.

Faculties of education could provide school and practical teaching experience opportunities at schools implementing inclusion in addition to theoretical and practical courses on inclusive education for prospective classrooms teachers.

The opinions of teachers and normally-developing children regarding inclusion could be determined using mixed research models combining both qualitative and quantitative perspectives, or qualitative research methods in which more than one data collection method is utilized.

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