

# Preschool Teachers' Perspectives Regarding Inclusive Education Practices: Mersin Sample

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## Abstract

Studies evaluating the attitudes of teachers towards the practice of mainstreaming education are very limited. The main purpose of this research is to examine the perspectives of pre-school teachers regarding the practice of mainstreaming education. It investigates teachers' thoughts on integration education, challenges encountered in this area and their possible solutions, how integration education practices affect students with normal development, and the acceptance of integration students by their normal development peers. As a general survey, this study uses the maximum diversity model, which is an objective sampling method. The study group comprises 20 pre-school teachers working in Yenişehir district of Mersin center in Turkey. Researchers specializing in this field of expertise collected data using 10 personal information questionnaires, 9 interview forms consisting of open-ended questions about integration education, and a personal information form. Teachers generally took 10-15 minutes to answer the questions on the interview form, and the data were analyzed in terms of the answers given. The teachers who participated in the study reported that the mainstreaming students who were special needs were found to be beneficial (70%), they were positive towards the mainstreaming students (31.4%), and the normal developmental students developed cooperation skills and supportive emotions (30.8%). Some 39.1% reported solving the difficulties they experienced by establishing school-family-child cooperation abilities (47.4%) and that physical environments had to be corrected first (26.1%) in order to increase the effectiveness of cohesion education practices. In addition, empathy studies and preparation of children with special needs and normal development were important in terms of acceptance of integration students (33.3%), preparation of Individualized Education Program (IEP) by teachers' attention to children's readiness level (44.4%) while preparing Individualized Education Program (52.2%) of the respondents.

**Keywords:** Preschool, special needs, inclusion

## 1. Introduction

Both the importance of and interest in education around the world continue to increase. A person's ability to adapt to his/her environment, to meet his/her needs, and to act in this interest of him/herself is closely related to the education s/he receives. Education is described as the formation process of the desired changes in his/her behaviors by means of his/her experiences. Describing education as a behavioral change process has led to the perception of curricula as completely dynamic and continuous experiences, and curriculum development studies as a teaching-learning process (Fidan, 2012, 2).

Pre-school education is the first level of education considered important in the learning-teaching processes. Children at this level are prepared for their future life and the future education stages by means of an environment that offers rich, cognitive stimuli, strong language interaction, and positive social and emotional experiences according to their development stages and on an individual basis (MoNE, 2013, 12). Pre-school education is accepted as a preparation period in terms of providing students with important opportunities to maximize their existing potential (Kuru, Turaşlı, 2007). Early life experiences determine and affect children's attitude towards school, learning and their own skills; therefore, ensuring children have a positive experience at this stage is essential to their future growth.

Ensuring a positive educational environment is complemented by the development and implementation of appropriate curricula. The pre-school education curriculum includes practices to support both for children with special needs and children with normal development. Considering the needs of children with special needs, preschool education aims to provide equal opportunities for all children in terms of preparing them for primary school and future learning.

If conducted under appropriate conditions inclusive education, children with special needs can be easily included in the classroom and their needs can be met (Öncül & Batu, 2005). In the Regulation for Special Education Services (Item 67), inclusion is described as "special education practices in which support education services are provided based on the principle that the individuals who need special education being placed in the state or private preschools, primary schools, secondary schools, and informal education institutions to continue their education together with the individuals who do not require" (As cited in Altıntaş et al., 2015). The purpose of inclusive education is to enable the child to use his/her interests and skills in the best possible way and to make his/her life in society easier, as opposed to trying to turn the child into a normal development child (MoNE, 2010, 17). According to a report by the Regulation for Special Education Services, which was published on May 31, 2006 in the *Official Gazette* (numbered 26184), compulsory education for individuals with special needs

begins in preschool.

In order for inclusive education to be successful, school management, parents and the students' peers of must fulfill important responsibilities. Teachers' attitudes towards children with special needs and their skills are also very important. When a student with special needs is present in the classroom, the teacher must adapt his/her lesson plan in order to involve these children in classroom activities and implement the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Individualized Teaching Program (ITP).

The Individualized Training Program Development Unit (ITPDU) prepares an individualized education plan for children with special needs by examining the report prepared by the educational diagnosis, monitoring, and evaluation team. The ITPDU is formed under the chairmanship of the manager of the institution or a manager s/he assigns, the teacher who is assigned to provide special education, the student with special needs, his/her family, the school counselor, the teacher assigned to prepare education programs, the form teacher or the teacher of a specific subject appropriate to the content of the program prepared, and, if needed, a person from the monitoring, diagnosis, and evaluation team. Individualized education plans include the child's education performance at that time, long-term (yearly) goals, including short-term teaching objectives, the special education services that will be provided to the child, the extent to which the child will be able to participate in regular education activities, the timetable for these services, the proper aim, criterion, and evaluation procedure, a timetable that will cover at least one year to evaluate the appropriate teaching aids (MEGEP, 2007, 16).

Individuals with special needs must be provided with appropriate education according to their developmental level and interests. Their education is as important as the education of normal developing individuals in terms of equality of opportunities in education. The characteristics of the teacher are one of the most basic determinants of the quality of preschool education and the development of children in the classroom. Children can discover and benefit from learning opportunities in supportive environments where they are valued, loved, and feel safe. The most important component of this supportive environment is the consistent and safe relationship between the child and the teacher (MoNE, 2013, 12). Teachers' attitudes towards inclusion can be influenced by their age, level of class, class size, type of special needs, degree of handicap, and the amount of support that the teacher gets from the school administration (Batu & Kircaali-İftar, 2005). Regulation for Special Education Services is stated that "The population of the classes in which mainstreaming students are present cannot exceed 10 students in preschool education institutions in case of the presence of two mainstreaming students, and 20 in case of the presence of one inclusive student" (MoNE, 2010, 17).

The number of studies on inclusive education practices in preschool education is quite limited. This study's focus on collecting information about inclusive education practices in preschools will contribute to the literature on various inclusion practices and will be a guide in terms of the future regulations and precautions.

### 1.1 Purpose of the Study

The main aim of this study is to investigate preschool teachers' perspectives regarding inclusive education practices. To do so, this research endeavors to answer the following questions:

- What are the participants' perspectives regarding inclusive education?
- What difficulties have participants encountered during inclusive education practices?
- What do participants suggest for overcoming difficulties encountered during inclusive education practices?
- What are the participants' perspectives regarding increasing the effectiveness of inclusive education practices?
- What are the participants' perspectives regarding the effects of inclusion practices on mainstreaming students?
- What are the participants' perspectives regarding the effects of inclusion practices on normal developing children?
- What are the participants' perspectives regarding the factors enabling the acceptance of mainstreaming children by normally developing children?
- What are the participants' perspectives regarding the points that need to be considered while preparing an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?
- What are the participants' perspectives regarding the points that need to be considered while preparing an Individualized Teaching Program (ITP)?

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Design of the Study

This general survey research, which is qualitative in nature, used the maximum variation model, a purposeful sampling method used to determine preschool teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. Qualitative research is based on an interpretive approach and utilizes data collection methods such as unstructured observation, unstructured interviews, and document analysis. A process towards the phenomena and cases are revealed in their natural contexts in a realistic and holistic way. In other words, this approach takes paradigm formation as its basis and aims to investigate and understand social events in their contexts (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

## 2.2 Participants

The participants were 20 preschool teachers working in Yenişehir district of Mersin in Turkey. The sample group was determined according to the maximum variation method, purposeful sampling carried out on a voluntary basis and based on ease of accessibility. Purposeful sampling is a systematic, non-probability sampling method. This sampling method purposefully focuses on one or several sub-layers of the population rather than a representative sample of the population. In other words, purposeful sampling means to make observing the most appropriate part of the universe for the problem (Sencer, 1989, 386).

The demographic information of the preschool teachers who participated in this study was determined by frequency distribution and is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic data of the participants

Demographic Information	f	%
Age		
20-25	4	20.0
26-31	6	30.0
32-37	5	25.0
38-43	1	5.0
43+	4	20.0
Marital Status		
Married	9	45.0
Single	11	55.0
Educational Status		
High School Diploma	1	5.0
Bachelor's Degree	18	90.0
Master's Degree	1	5.0
Experience		
0-5 years	9	45.0
6-11 years	5	25.0
12-18 years	6	30.0

As seen in Table 1, 20 teachers were surveyed for this study; 30% were between 26-31 years old, 25% were between 32-37 years old, 20% were between 20-25 years old, 20% were 43+ years old, and 5% were between 38-43 years old. Regarding their marital status, 55% were single while 45% were married. Data on their level of education information revealed that 90% had a bachelor's degree, 5% had a master's degree, and 5% had only a high school diploma. Regarding their work experience, 45% had 0-5 years, 30% had 12-18 years, and 25% had 6-11 years of experience. Through frequency distribution, the participants' experience of receiving training related to inclusive education, classroom sizes, and the presence of mainstreaming students in their classes was determined and is presented in Table 2.

## 2.3 Data Collection Tools

In line with expert opinions, an interview form and a demographic information form were used. The forms comprised 10 demographic background questions and 9 open-ended questions regarding inclusive education. A review of the literature was conducted to prepare the interview form, which was finalized after consulting expert opinions. Questions regarding age, gender, marital status, experience, educational status, the status of receiving training regarding inclusive education, the presence of mainstreaming students in their classroom, the department of graduation, and classroom sizes were included in the demographic information form. Similarly, in the interview form, questions on the teachers' perspectives regarding inclusive education, difficulties encountered and suggestions to overcome them, ways to improve inclusive education, effects of inclusive education on typically developing and mainstreaming students, and points that need to be considered while preparing IEP and ITP were included.

## 2.4 Data Collection and Analysis

During data collection, preschool teachers were first instructed that their participation was on a voluntary basis

and that they should give honest answers when filling in the forms. For the interviews, no specific time or place was determined; rather, the interviews were conducted based on the teachers' availability. The interview form used to determine the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education was given to the teacher and they were given about 10-15 minutes to answer the questions. Their answers were analyzed and evaluated under the titles of this study.

The data was collected through face-to-face and direct interviews with the participants. During the interviews, questions regarding inclusive education were asked in order to figure out the teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. As a result of the interviews with the participants, the collected data were transformed into findings and interpreted. Qualitative responses were analyzed respectively. The data obtained from the interview questions were digitalized and analyzed.

### 3. Results

The results regarding the participating preschool teachers' status of receiving training on inclusion and having mainstreaming students in their classrooms and classroom size are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Participating preschool teachers' experience of receiving training on inclusion and having mainstreaming students in their classrooms and classroom size

Codes	f	%
Experience receiving training on inclusion		
Yes	14	70.0
No	6	30.0
Classroom size		
11-16	7	35.0
17-22	9	45.0
23-28	4	20.0
Experience having mainstreaming students in their classes		
Yes	6	30.0
No	14	70.0

As seen in Table 2, 70% of respondents received training on inclusion, while 30% did not receive any training on inclusion. The distribution of the classroom sizes is as follows: 35% had between 11-16 students, 45% had between 17-22 students, and 20% had between 23-28 students. Regarding participants' experiencing of teaching mainstreaming students in their classrooms, 30% reported having mainstreaming students in their classroom, while 70% reported not having mainstreaming students in their classroom.

The results regarding the participants' perspectives on inclusive education are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Participants' perspectives on inclusive education

Codes of perspectives	f	%
Inclusive education is useful	14	70.0
Its implementation requires the organization of educational environments in terms of equipment	4	20.0
It is useful if students actively participate	1	5.0
It is useful if the degree of the student's disability is considered	1	5.0

As seen in Table 3, 70% of participants think that inclusive education is useful, 20% think it requires the organization of educational environments, 5% think it is useful if the students actively participate, and 5% think it is useful if the degree of the student's disability is considered.

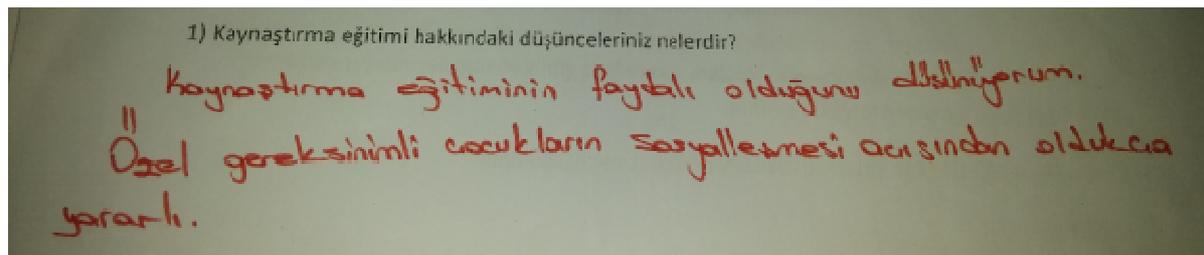


Figure 1. A participant's perspective regarding inclusive education

Translation: (I think that inclusive education is useful. It is quite useful in terms of socializing students with special needs)

The results regarding the difficulties preschool teachers encountered during inclusive education practices are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Difficulties preschool teachers encountered during inclusive education practices

Type of difficulty	f	%
Mainstreaming students' inability to comply with the classroom rules	9	39.1
Organizing educational environments with equipment	6	26.1
Normally developing children and their families do not accept mainstreaming students	4	13.8
Crowded classrooms hinder the engagement for activity of mainstreaming students	3	10.5
Lack of time dedicated to normally developing students	1	3.5
Failure to equip mainstreaming students with self-care abilities	1	3.5
Challenges of preparing IEP	1	3.5

Findings show that regarding difficulties encountered during inclusive practices, 39.1% of participants experienced most great difficulty regarding mainstreaming students' adaptation to the classroom. Further, 26.1% of the teachers indicated difficulty with the organization of the educational environment, with normally developing children and their families accepting mainstreaming students (13.8%), with the inability to allocate time for normally developing children (3.5%), the failure to equip mainstreaming students with self-care abilities (3.5%), the difficulty of designing IEP (3.5%), and crowded classrooms that hinder the engagement of mainstreaming students (10.5%).

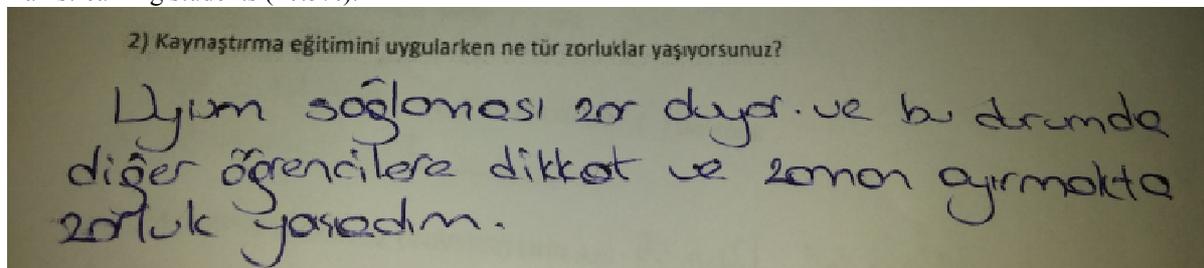


Figure 2. A participant's perspective regarding difficulties encountered during inclusive education practices

Translation: (The adaptation process is challenging and, therefore, I experienced difficulties allocating time and interest to other students)

Participants' suggestions for overcoming the difficulties encountered during inclusive education practices are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Participants' suggestions for overcoming difficulties encountered during inclusive education practices

Codes for suggestions to overcome difficulties encountered	f	%
Family-school-child cooperation	9	47.4
Conducting research	3	15.8
Approaching children with empathy, love and interest	3	15.8
Organizing activities for the acceptance of mainstreaming students	3	15.8
Organizing effective and efficient educational environments	1	5.2

As seen in Table 5, according to the participants, difficulties encountered during inclusive education practices can be overcome by the family-school-child (47.4%), conducting research (15.8%), approaching children with empathy, love and interest (15.8%), organizing activities for the acceptance of mainstreaming students (15.8%), and organizing effective and efficient educational environments (5.2%).

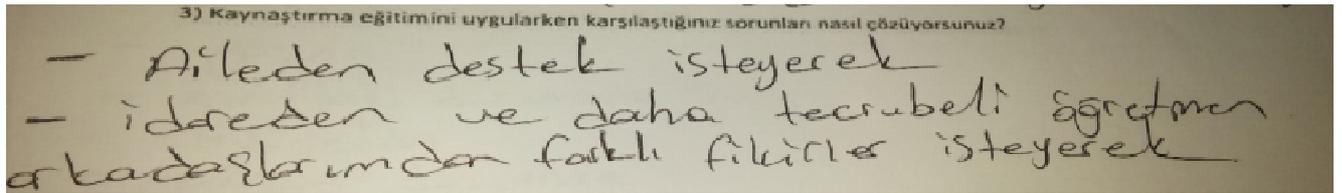


Figure 3. A participant's suggestions for overcoming difficulties encountered during inclusive education practices

Translation: (Requesting support from families, asking for the opinions of the administration and more experienced colleagues)

The results regarding the participants' perspectives about increasing the effectiveness of inclusive education practices were presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Participants' perspectives about increasing the effectiveness of inclusive education practices

Name of suggestion	f	%
Physical activity	6	26.1
Active participation in activities	5	21.7
Providing support staff for preschool teachers	4	17.4
Supporting family-school cooperation	4	17.4
Supporting teachers' self-development	4	17.4

Participants underlined the following suggestions in order to increase the effectiveness of inclusion practices: active participation of students with special needs in activities (21.7%), physical activity (26.1%), providing support staff for preschool teachers (17.4%), supporting family-school cooperation (17.4%), and supporting teachers' self-development and occupational development (17.4%).

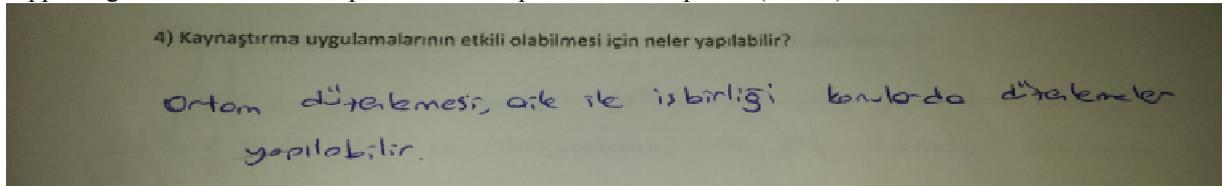


Figure 4. A participant's perspective on increasing the effectiveness of inclusive education practices

Translation: (Effort can be made regarding the arrangement of the teaching environment and the family-school cooperation)

The results regarding the participants' perspectives on the effects of inclusive education practices on mainstreaming students are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Participants' perspectives on the effects of inclusion practices on mainstreaming students

Effects of inclusive education practices on mainstreaming students	f	%
Fosters desired (positive) behaviors	11	31.4
Provides an opportunity for socialization	10	28.6
Provides tools to adapt to the learning environment	10	28.6
Supports individual development	4	11.4

Regarding the effects of inclusive education practices, the participants reported that it provides an opportunity for socialization (28.6%), provides tools to adapt to the learning environment (28.6%), fosters desired (positive) behaviors (31.4%), and supports individual development (11.4%).

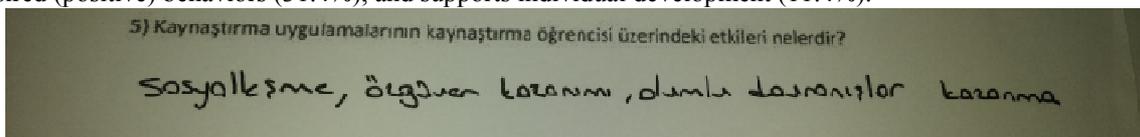


Figure 5. A participant's perspectives on the effect of inclusion practices on mainstreaming students

Translation: (Socialization, the acquisition of self-confidence, the acquisition of positive behaviors)

The results regarding the participants' perspectives on the effects of inclusive education practices on

normally developing children are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Participants' perspectives on the effects of inclusive education practices on normally developing children

Effect	f	%
Development of cooperation	8	30.8
Empathy	6	23.1
Acceptance of and respect for differences and respect	5	19.2
Negative effect on their development	4	15.4
The development of their view of the world in a positive sense	2	7.7
Positive social behaviors	1	3.8
Awareness of self	1	3.8

As seen in Table 8, while 15.4% of participants reported that inclusive education practices negatively influence the development of typically developing children, 84.6% of participants reported the opposite. The latter group highlighted the development of cooperation (30.8%), empathy (23.1%), acceptance of and respect for differences (19.2%), the development of their view of the world (7.7%), and awareness of self (3.8%).

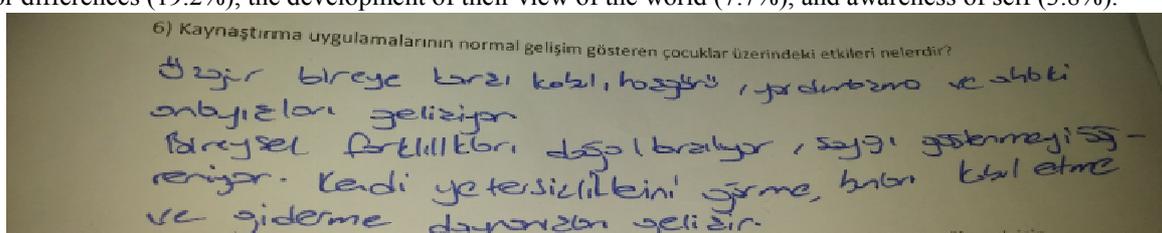


Figure 6. A participant's perspectives on the effects of inclusive education practices on typically developing children

*Translation: (Their acceptance, tolerance, moral understanding for and cooperation with handicapped individuals are developed. They learn to take individual differences naturally, and respect them as well. They develop the behaviors to see and accept their own incapable sides, and help others with their incapability.)*

Even though the results revealed that inclusive education practices have positive influences on both mainstreaming and typically developing students, the acceptance of mainstreaming children by typically developing children remains a crucial issue. In this regard, the participants' perspectives regarding the factors enabling the acceptance of mainstreaming children by typically developing children were presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Participants' perspectives regarding the factors enabling the acceptance of mainstreaming children by typically developing children

Factors enabling the acceptance of mainstreaming students	f	%
Engaging in empathy exercises	7	33.3
Preparing mainstreaming and typically developing children in advance	7	33.3
Including mainstreaming students in group activities	4	19.1
Encouraging family participation	2	9.5
Assigning children with responsibilities	1	4.8

Participants listed the following factors as enabling the acceptance of mainstreaming student by typically developing students: engaging in empathy exercises (33.3%), preparing mainstreaming and typically developing children in advance (33.3%), including mainstreaming students in group activities (19.1%), encouraging family participation (9.5%), and assigning children with responsibilities (4.8%).

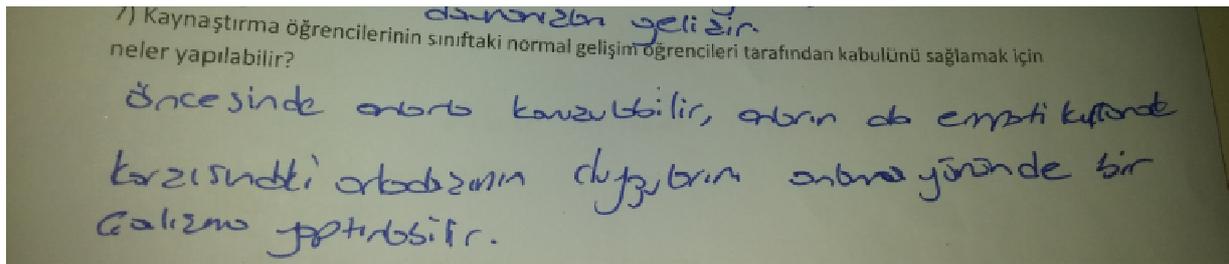


Figure 7. A participant's perspective regarding the factors enabling the acceptance of mainstreaming children by typically developing children

*Translation: (It is suggested that the teacher should talk to the mainstreaming students before they are joined by the typically-developing children, and have them do practice to empathize with these students to understand their feelings.)*

IEPs should be prepared in order to support the development of mainstreaming students. Participants' perspectives regarding areas on which to focus while preparing an IEP are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Participants' perspectives regarding areas of focus while preparing an IEP

Areas of focus	f	%
Students' level of readiness	12	44.4
Educational environment	6	22.2
Type/level of special needs	5	18.5
Objectives and indicators	2	7.4
Expectations of the school and parents	2	7.4

Participants highlighted the following points to be considered while preparing an IEP: students' level of readiness (44.4%), type/level of special needs (18.5%), educational environment (22.2%), objectives and indicators (7.4%), and expectations of the school and parents (7.4%).

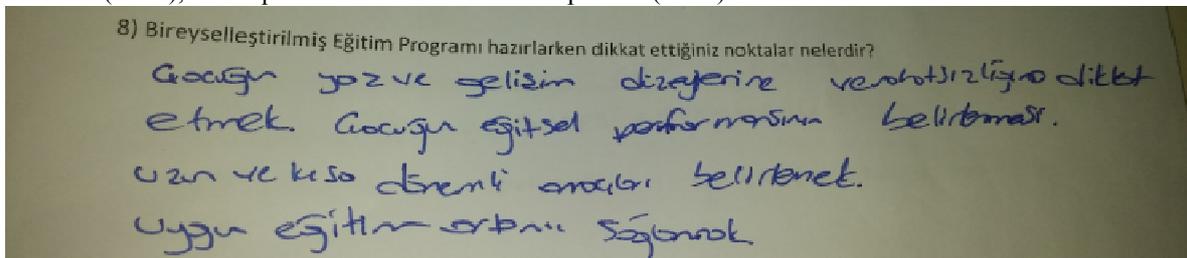


Figure 8. A participant's perspectives regarding the points that need to be considered while preparing an IEP  
*Translation: (Considering the age, developmental level and type of handicap in the child; determining the educational performance of the child as well as the short- and long-term purposes and providing the appropriate educational environment.)*

Participants' perspectives regarding the points to consider while preparing an ITP are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Participants' perspectives regarding the points to consider while preparing an ITP

Points to consider	f	%
I have no idea	12	52.2
Children's' characteristics	4	17.4
Children's' readiness	4	17.4
Program-based assessment	2	8.7
Type and severity of disability	1	4.4

As shown in Table 11, 52.2% of participants are not knowledgeable about ITP. Other perspectives reported include: children's' characteristics (17.4%), children's' readiness (17.4%), program-based assessment (8.7%), and the type of disability (4.4%).

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the participants' perspectives regarding inclusive education showed the following: a useful implementation ( $f=14$ ), an implementation requiring the organization of educational environments ( $f=4$ ), useful if the active participation of students is ensured ( $f=1$ ), and useful if the degree of disability is considered ( $f=1$ ). These perspectives could be developed through the participants' observation of the benefits of inclusive education practices. A vast majority of participants exhibited a positive attitude towards inclusive education. Kırcaali-İftar (1998) emphasized that inclusive education classroom teachers consider inclusive education as a right of students with special needs and believe that success will be achieved when the requirements are fulfilled.

Considering the difficulties encountered during inclusive education practices, the participants mentioned various difficulties such as mainstreaming students' inability to comply with the classroom ( $f=9$ ), organization of educational environments ( $f=6$ ), typically developing children and their families do not accept mainstreaming students ( $f=4$ ), inability to allocate time for typically developing children ( $f=1$ ), failure to equip mainstreaming students with self-care abilities ( $f=1$ ), difficulty preparing IEP ( $f=1$ ), and crowded classes adversely affect students' attitudes towards integration education ( $f=3$ ).

In his study, Koçyiğit (2015) investigated the perspectives of teachers, school counselors, parents of typically developing children, and parents of mainstreaming students regarding inclusive education practices in preschool, the difficulties encountered, and their suggested solutions. The difficulties encountered were categorized under five headings: parent-based difficulties, student-based difficulties, administration-based difficulties, teacher-based difficulties, and environment-based difficulties.

Considering the suggestions for overcoming the difficulties encountered during inclusive education practices, the participants proposed conducting research ( $f=3$ ), family-school-child cooperation ( $f=9$ ), approaching children with empathy, love and interest ( $f=3$ ), organizing activities for the acceptance of mainstreaming students ( $f=3$ ), and organizing effective and efficient educational environments ( $f=3$ ). Koçyiğit (2015) revealed that teachers conduct meetings with parents, provide individual support for parents, or receive individual support from parents about the information they need, and attempt to figure out activity-based solutions in order to overcome the difficulties encountered.

The participants underlined the following in order to increase the effectiveness of inclusion practices: active participation in activities (21.7%), arrangement of physical activities (26.1%), providing support staff for preschool teachers (17.4%), supporting the family-school cooperation (17.4%), and supporting teachers' self-development and occupational development (17.4%). In order for inclusive education practices to be successful, the difference between general and special education, negative attitudes towards low-achieving students, the learning environment of the institution, the parents' participation in education, and support staff should be considered. The success of inclusive practices can be improved through making arrangements that consider the aforementioned points (Özyürek, 2015). Individuals' educational needs, capacity, and educational environments should be determined and taken into consideration. Various actors and variables such as administrators, teachers, parents, mainstreaming students, typically developing children, and physical environment are influential in running a successful inclusive program (Kırcaali-İftar, 1998).

Considering the effects of inclusive education on mainstreaming students, the participants reported that inclusive education provides socialization ( $f=10$ ), encourages them to adapt to the learning environment ( $f=10$ ), equips them with desired (positive) behaviors ( $f=11$ ), and supports individual development ( $f=4$ ). These results are consistent with the literature, which claims that children with special needs have the opportunity to acquire communication skills that will facilitate their adaptation into society as well as accelerate their development (Özyürek, 2015).

Considering the effects of inclusive education on typically developing children, four of the participants indicated that the development of typically developing children is negatively affected. The remaining participants listed the following points among the effects of inclusive on typically developing children: the acceptance of and respect for differences ( $f=5$ ), the development of empathy ( $f=6$ ), the development of their view of the world ( $f=2$ ), the development of their ability to cooperate ( $f=8$ ), the development of positive social behaviors ( $f=1$ ), and the awareness of self ( $f=1$ ). The review of the literature also revealed similar results. According to Şahin (2010), the benefits of inclusive education for typically developing children are unconditioned acceptance, tolerance, cooperation, common life awareness, the development of democratic and moral understanding, respect for individual differences, noticing self-deficiencies and accepting them and developing behaviors to overcome them, dealing with negative emotions, the development of leadership, being a model, and sense of responsibility.

Considering the factors enabling the acceptance of mainstreaming children by typically developing children, the teachers suggested some facilitative factors such as developing and implementing empathy exercises ( $f=7$ ), preparing mainstreaming and typically developing children in advance ( $f=7$ ), including mainstreaming students in group activities ( $f=4$ ), encouraging family participation ( $f=2$ ), and assigning children with responsibilities ( $f=1$ ).

In their study, Eldeniz-Çetin and Acay-Sözber (2016) determined teachers' level of knowledge regarding inclusion. 12 music teachers selected through criterion-based sampling technique participated in their study and a semi-structured interview form was used to collect data. The authors analyzed the data using descriptive statistics. They found that the participants had some knowledge regarding inclusion and made suggestions such as providing in-service training, providing IEPs as already prepared, increasing the number of studies on children, decreasing classroom sizes, organizing rooms of supportive education, and increasing the interdisciplinary cooperation.

In this study, the participants were also asked about their perspectives regarding factors to consider while preparing an IEP and ITP. Considering the preparation of an IEP, the participants underlined: students' level of readiness ( $f=12$ ), type and severity of special needs ( $f=5$ ), educational environment ( $f=6$ ), objectives and indicators, and the expectations of the school and parents ( $f=2$ ). Considering the preparation of an ITP, 12 participants indicated that they had no idea. The points underlined by the remaining teachers are: children's characteristics ( $f=4$ ), children's readiness ( $f=4$ ), program-based assessment ( $f=2$ ), and the type and severity of the disability ( $f=1$ ).

IEPs are the written plans developed to organize the services to be provided for students with special needs aged between 3-21 years old. Article 5 (f) of the Ministry of National Education Special Education Services Regulation indicating that "[a]n individualized education plan was developed for students with special needs and educational plans are applied individually" obliges the preparation and implementation of IEPs (MoNE, 2017, 15). IEPs can be thought as an annual plan divided into units and which is particular to a student with special needs based on his/her performance level, interests, and abilities. IEPs are developed by IEP development units (MoNE, 2010, 62). The preschool teacher is a member of this unit. However, in practice, preschool teachers develop IEPs in most cases. While preparing an IEP, the report developed by the educational diagnostic, monitoring, and evaluation team regarding the child with special needs should be taken into consideration first.

The results, from a broader perspective, indicated that the teachers' perspectives regarding inclusion are positive; however, educational environments should be organized and children's active participation should be fostered in order to obtain more effective results. The teachers attempted to overcome the difficulties encountered through the organization of the educational environment and by fostering family-school cooperation. Inclusive practices were found to benefit students with special needs in terms of adaptation to their environment, displaying positive behaviors, and socialization. The reluctance to be involved in group activities was a negative effect of inclusive education for typically developing children, while the acceptance of and respect for differences, the development of empathy, positive social behaviors, the development of their view of the world were discovered as positive effects.

## 5. Suggestions

The following suggestions were made based on the results of this study:

- Preservice training regarding inclusive education should be implemented in an effective way;
- Informative studies can be implemented for teachers and typically developing children;
- The scope of university courses regarding inclusive education should be extended and practical studies should be included in the curriculum;
- The family-school cooperation is of critical importance in order for inclusive education to be successful. Family guidance services regarding inclusion should be disseminated;
- Research can be planned to increase social acceptance of mainstreaming students by other children.
- Research can be conducted on the preparation of IEPs and ITPs to determine how to better develop them?
- This study can be repeated with a wider sample group using data collection techniques such as observation in addition to interviews.

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