

Forming Effective Inclusive Education: From School Principals Perspectives

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Abstract

In this study, it was aimed to determine the opinions of school principals in early childhood education in terms of their perception about access to education, participation in education and support to education within the scope of inclusive education, about the practices they carry out in their organizations and about what kind of other studies to be done. It was designed as a phenomenological study, a qualitative research methodology, as it aimed at an in-depth examination of the views of school principals. The study group consisted of 10 kindergarten principals working in Gaziantep city centre. Semi-structured open-ended interview protocol was used to collect data. The research data were analysed using content and descriptive analysis methods. As a result of the study, it was concluded that school principals had a general perspective on access to education, participation in education and support to education, which are the components of inclusive early childhood education, and they had some practices in their organizations either planned or unplanned. Furthermore, school principals

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pointed out the limitations of schools regarding inclusive education and a great many areas to be improved to enhance them.

Keywords: Inclusive education; Early childhood; Pre-school.

Etkili Kapsayıcı Eğitim Oluşturma: Okul Yöneticilerinin Perspektifinden

Öz

Bu çalışmada erken çocukluk eğitimi veren eğitim kurumu yöneticilerinin kapsayıcı eğitim kapsamında eğitime erişim, eğitime katılım ve eğitime destek konusundaki algılarının neler olduğu, kurumlarında bu konuda yaptıkları çalışmalar ve daha farklı ne tür çalışmalar yapılabileceğine ilişkin görüşlerinin belirlenmesi amaçlanmıştır. Bu çalışma okul müdürlerinin konu ile ilgili derinlemesine görüşlerinin incelenmesi bakımından nitel bir araştırma deseni olan olgubilim deseninde tasarlanmıştır. Çalışma grubu Gaziantep ilinde çalışan 10 anaokulu müdüründen oluşmaktadır. Veri toplama aracı olarak yarı yapılandırılmış açık uçlu görüşme soruları kullanılmıştır. Veriler içerik ve betimsel analiz yöntemleri kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda yöneticilerin kapsayıcı erken çocukluk eğitimi bileşenlerinden eğitime erişim, eğitime katılım ve eğitime destek konusunda genel bir bakış açılarının olduğu ve bununla ilgili kurumlarında planlı ya da plansız olarak bazı uygulamalar yaptıkları sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Ancak bunlara ek olarak yöneticiler kurumların kapsayıcı eğitim çalışmaları ile ilgili sınırlılıklarına ve bu çalışmaların artırılması yönünde birçok geliştirilmesi gereken alan olduğuna da dikkat çekmişlerdir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kapsayıcı eğitim; Erken çocukluk; Okulöncesi.

Introduction

Inclusive education is defined by UNESCO (2005) as the process of responding to different needs of all learners, cultures and communities by increasing participation in learning and reducing discrimination within the education system. It includes the changes in content, approaches, structures and strategies that are important for the common vision of all school-age children with the idea that it is the responsibility of the states to educate all children. In another definition, inclusive education has been described as the activities, processes and strategies aimed at realizing the right to education for everyone in quality and fit for purpose (Stubbs, 2008). In addition, in the works of Education Reform Initiative (2016), the main purpose of inclusive education has

been emphasized to be the elimination of behaviours such as exclusion and discrimination that may arise from prejudice and unfavourable attitudes regarding the different characteristics and conditions of individuals in educational settings.

The examination of the studies in literature yields that teachers provide education to a good many students with various needs, interests and features at the present time (Dağlıoğlu, Turupcu-Doğan and Basit, 2017). It is necessary to apply an education model on the basis of equality and justice by considering personal development, characteristic features and individual differences. It is important to adopt an educational approach covering inclusive principles for all children instead of a discriminating one neglecting individual differences. When examining the outstanding educational systems in the world, it can be alleged that they bring all the individuals together with quality educational opportunities from any social class. It is crucial that the education system is fully accessible and embraces an inclusive model (Demirel-Kaya, 2019). Inclusion requires accepting the differences of each individual (Şimşek, 2019). It can be claimed that the most important means to ensure it within society is the education model with an inclusive attitude.

The concept of inclusive education is mostly confused with the practices such as special education and inclusion education (Demirel-Kaya, 2019). Special education refers to education provided by special education teachers for the individuals with some special needs in a specially designed environment. Inclusion education is the process of providing education for the individuals with mild disabilities through including in regular classes (Stubbs, 2008). However, inclusive education, as designated by UNESCO (2005), is alleged to be a process attempting to respond to differences of all learners by minimizing discrimination within the system. Stubbs (2008) elaborated two models: “individual model” and “social model” in order to differentiate inclusive education from other concepts like inclusion education and special education. The individual model agrees that the problem is related to the student and it can be exemplified by the concepts of special education and inclusion education. In the social model, it is postulated that the problem prevails in the educational system and inclusive education finds a place there.

One of the significant steps taken for the development of perceptions and practices regarding inclusive education in the world is the Salamanca Declaration announced within the framework of the conference held in Spain in

1994 (UNESCO, 1994). The Declaration drew attention to the importance of the right to education for everyone and it was emphasized that educational systems to meet the special needs of each child should be developed (Dede, 1996). Later, the principle of “Education for All”, which was included in the Salamanca Declaration, was emphasized in the World Education Form held in Dakar, and it was decided to take action to meet the educational needs of every individual by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000). Inclusive education is also one of the overemphasized issues in Turkey especially in recent years. It has been observed that Turkey recognizes quality education for the individuals as a fundamental human right both based on international agreements and contracts to which it is a party and its own national legislation and shapes its policies in line with this consideration (Constitution of Turkey, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the National Education Basic Law). The situation analysis published by ERG (2016) implied that half of the individuals with disabilities in Turkey were unable to access to education. It was pointed out that as the education level of the individuals with special needs increased, their access to education gradually decreased. In the same report, it was observed that the rate of access to education, especially in early childhood, was quite low. It has also been emphasized in several studies that there are many shortcomings on the matter of access to education of the individuals with special needs in Turkey (Sart, Barış, Sarıışık and Düşkün, 2016; Demirel-Kaya, 2019). On the other hand, a study conducted in Turkey concluded that the textbooks do not have a satisfying inclusive language and include content reinforcing social prejudice and stereotypes against the individuals with special needs (Çayır and Ergün, 2014). Moreover, it was observed that Syrian students, who left their countries after the Syrian civil war in 2011 and had to settle in Turkey, also faced with many problems in educational environments (SETA, 2016; HRW, 2015; Yüce, 2018). From this point of view, it can be asserted that it is essential to ensure inclusion in education as stated by many international agreements and contracts. Integrating the principle of inclusion into the policies and practices to be held in Turkish educational system is important to change the aforementioned situation.

For a bright future, it is important for every child to receive quality education in the preschool period, which is the fundamental step of educational system. It is a period in which the personality of 0-6 year-old children, also named early childhood, begins to be moulded, their interaction with the environment is relatively high and their developmental characteristics are barely

dominant. It can be alleged that the main purpose of the organizations in early childhood education is to adapt children to social life. It is important for the children in this period to receive education in a convenient educational environment in terms of socialization (Yüce, 2015). Thus, it is necessary to direct all children to quality educational environment without exception. Given the importance of quality inclusive education, coexistence and mutual respect of the children with different developmental characteristics and needs have many benefits such as revealing the strengths of children, supporting their academic achievement, assisting all children without discrimination, participating the children in social life and developing their social interaction (UNICEF, Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Education).

Barton and Smith (2015) emphasized that there are three crucial components: access, participation and support for quality inclusive early childhood education. Access is defined as environmental arrangements to be made in learning environments and including technology in the process. Participation refers to the participation of children in learning and decision-making processes. Support can be described as educational opportunities aiming to improve knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers, administrators and families regarding inclusive education. In this regard, interviews were held with the administrators of early childhood education organizations within the scope of this study. Through the interviews, it was aimed to determine the perception of school principals about access to education, participation in education and support to education, about the practices they carry out with regard to these components in their organizations and about what kind of other studies to be done. It is believed that the present study is significant in terms of an in-depth examination of inclusive education perception through the eyes of the administrators working at the schools in early childhood period.

Method

Research Model

The study was designed based on phenomenology, a qualitative research methodology, which is used to investigate the cases that are not completely unfamiliar but the meaning of which is not fully understood (Şimşek and Yıldırım, 2018). Phenomenology or also phenomenological study has been defined as the common meaning of the experiences of several people about a phenomenon or a concept (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the phenomenological design was used as it focused on collecting an in-depth data on

inclusive education in terms of access to education, participation in education and support to education according to the opinions of school principals working at early childhood period. Ethics committee approval of this study was obtained with the decision no 28 of Gaziantep University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee at the 10 meeting dated 06.08.2021.

Study Group

The study group of the study consisted of 10 school principals working in Gaziantep city centre. Criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used in determining the working group. In criterion sampling, the observation units of study can be chosen among the individuals, events, objects or situations with certain qualifications. In this case, the units that meet the specified criteria are sampled (Büyükoztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz and Demirel, 2018). The study was conducted with the principals of 10 kindergartens which were selected to be the pilot schools in Gaziantep city centre within the scope of the “The Project of Inclusive Early Childhood Education for Children with Disabilities” carried out by UNICEF and the Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Education. Five female and five male principals were included in the study.

Table 1. Professional Experience of School Administrators in the Working Group

Participants	Management Experience	Teaching Experience	Total	Age	Gender
SP1	6	4	10	33	Female
SP2	16	6	22	44	Female
SP3	5	7	12	34	Female
SP4	6	4	10	32	Male
SP5	11	4	15	37	Female
SP6	11	10	21	43	Male
SP7	6	4	10	40	Female
SP8	5	6	11	34	Male
SP9	14	9	23	45	Male
SP10	5	11	16	39	Male

The professional seniority in management and teaching of the school principals in working group were presented in the table above. It was observed that they spent a longer period of time in management rather than teaching considering the average professional seniority of school principals.

Data Collection and Analysis

The interviews of the research were carried out and coded by the researchers. Researchers have conducted a thesis and various academic studies together, and there is no social bond between the participants and the researchers. Researchers have conducted qualitative research on different topics in educational sciences. The research data were collected through semi-structured open-ended interview protocol. Within the scope of interviews, nine questions were addressed the participants about what they perceive in terms of access to education, participation in education and support to education, what are the existing practices in their organizations and how they can be enhanced. The perception of administrators was attempted to be revealed through explanations about the questions. Interviews with school principals were held individually. Voice recording technique was used to collect the interview data. The interviews lasted 25-30 minutes on average. The obtained data were analysed through content and descriptive analyses, which are qualitative data analysis techniques. The interview recordings were transcribed. The codes were created based on raw data through the content analysis. The codes were categorized within the framework of interview questions and combined around three main themes (access to education, participation in education and support to education) and three sub-themes (elaboration, the practices of the organization and how can it be enhanced?). During the analysis process, pseudonyms were used for school principals such as SP1, SP2... SP10 and the findings were attempted to be reinforced through direct quotations of participants.

Validity and Reliability of the Study

Some measures to be taken in qualitative studies will not only contribute to the quality of the study but also affect its validity and reliability. Polkinghorne (1989) emphasized that the following should be considered to increase the quality of a phenomenological study: whether the researchers affect the participants in a way that they do not reflect their actual experiences, whether the recordings are transcribed properly, whether the transcripts convey the meaning of participant speeches, whether there are any other results other than those presented in transcripts, whether the researcher indicates those alternatives, whether it is possible to explain the specific content and links in the transcripts and life experiences with the help of structural description and whether the structural description is specific or otherwise generalizable (Creswell, 2013). In order to ensure the internal validity of the study, two experts in the field of educational sciences examined the consistency between

coding and the results of the researchers. In addition, the three school principals among the participants were informed about the obtained results as to check whether the research findings reflect their views. For external validity, the participants were determined using criterion sampling, which is one of the purposeful sampling methods. For reliability, raw data, coding and the obtained results were peer-reviewed. The experts examined the consistency between the raw data and coding and between the interpretations and the obtained results.

Findings

Findings on the Theme of Access to Education

The codes regarding the opinions of school principals about how they elaborate the theme of access to education, what kind of practices they carry out in their organizations and what can be done for effective implementation were given in Table 2.

Table 2. Coding of the Views of School Principals about how They Elaborate the Theme of Access to Education, What Kind of Practices They Carry out in Their Organizations and What can be done for Effective Implementation

Theme	Sub-Themes	Codes
Access to Education	Elaboration	Enjoying the right to education Eliminating barriers to education Reaching all children Providing equal education
	Practices in the organizations	Field scanning Parental seminars Resource room School introduction Individual interviews Informing through brochures Family visits Letter to parents Regular parent meetings Diagnostic studies Environmental arrangements Providing transportation Sensitivity in planning class size Existence of different educational environments
	How can it be enhanced?	Providing financial support Reporting and evaluating the practices Creating social awareness Cooperation with different institutions Employing special education teachers Increasing parent information activities Compulsory preschool education

It has been observed that school principals elaborated the process regarding the theme of access to education through the concepts such as

enjoying the right to education, eliminating barriers to education, and equal opportunities for education. While SP9 noted that *“Access to education, one of the inclusive education components, is the ability of all individuals to enjoy their right to education. In other words, whether s/he is disabled or not, or people with different ethnic origins can benefit from the education like all our students.”*. SP8 stated that they try to make sense of access to education with the questions of *“What we understand or interpret access to education, our priority in our school is... We act with the idea that inclusive and quality education is the right of every child. So what could be the barriers to access? What should we do to remove these obstacles?”*. It can be concluded that school principals have an elaboration on the theme of access to education with the ideas of providing access to school and exploiting it.

School principals listed the organizational practices regarding access to education such as field scanning, parental seminars, school introduction, diagnostic studies, environmental arrangements and the existence of different educational environments. SP10 opined that *“Well, we are doing field scans in the preparation periods at the very beginning of educational year. Besides, we organize seminars with guidance service, well, at various times and let’s say, introduce it.”*. SP6 declared that:

“We do this as an organization. Well, we have regular monthly meetings with the parents and other relatives of these children in association with the guidance service for the mainstreaming students that I aforementioned at certain periods in certain months. We identify the lack of development of these children. But we also identify positive behavioural changes. We share it with the family. We try to actively use the guidance service in this sense. Parent meetings are held regularly every month. With drama works or games, in other words, we try to be helpful for them by creating an environment in the classroom where those children can express themselves and share with their friends, in short.”

In addition, SP2 expressed his/her opinion with the expressions of:

“On a school-wide basis, we make, well, parent visits to our students who have, well, differences in terms of inclusive education. We do social cultural events. We observe, well, the individual differences in this regard, and we perform educational practices accordingly. Well, in our school in terms of revealing the individual differences, we take the individual differences into account and try to create a training model accordingly by creating different educational environments such as design workplaces, skills workshops, reading or activity areas or playfields.”

In general, it can be deduced that the school principals prioritize the practices especially for parents in their organizations in order to provide access to education.

School principals stressed that they could increase the practices for access to education through the suggestions such as providing financial support, creating social awareness, cooperating with different institutions and increasing parent information activities. In addition, SP1 stated that legal obligation would facilitate access to education by:

“Parent information plus the socio-economic status of the parent are very important. No sanctions for parents. There is no sanction in pre-school. In the first grade, law 222 goes in effect for not sending to primary school. Enrolling in primary school is compulsory according to the 222 No. issued Primary Education Act. Bu it is not the case for pre-school education. There must be such an obligation. There must be a legal obligation. I can't force anyone to bring their child to school. When they say they don't want, I can't do anything.”

On the other hand, SP6 mentioned about the importance of social awareness and the cooperative initiatives for access to education:

“One of the main things to be done is to educate these children starting from younger ages [...] it is, well, necessary to explain to the society that everyone should be sensitive. [...] We have to educate the society. [...] Well, it's not something that can be accomplished only by the school component. For example, the district registry offices or the ministries can properly work in coordination with each other and distribute various relevant posters, panels and newspapers to the houses. [...] It is necessary to use the municipalities very actively.”

Considering the suggestions given by school principals to increase access to education, it can be asserted that the importance of providing socio-economic support, carrying out the necessary studies on parents and society and corporate cooperation have become prominent.

Findings on the Theme of Participation in Education

The codes regarding the opinions of school principals about how they elaborate the theme of participation in education, what kind of practices they carry out in their organizations and what can be done for effective implementation were given in Table 3.

Table 3. Coding of the Views of School Principals about how They Elaborate the theme of Participation in Education, what kind of Practices They Carry out in Their Organizations and what can be done for Effective Implementation

Theme	Sub-Themes	Codes
Participation in Education	Elaboration	Including in education Providing mutual benefits Unconditional admission to school Providing equal educational opportunities Mutual cooperation Ensuring active participation of all students
	Practices in the organizations	Family participation events Guidance service studies In-school workshops Group activities Individual parent meetings Home visits Inclusive classes Communication with the child's immediate surrounding In-class activities Parent seminars Highlighting physical conditions of school
	How can it be enhanced?	Providing expert support Creating different educational environments within the school Meeting students' needs Making individual needs analysis Providing financial support Providing material support Providing support of different institutions Providing home education support Re-planning of school architectures Making improvements in teacher training Increasing teacher trainings Holding compulsory parent trainings Explaining the importance of preschool education

It has been observed that school principals elaborate the participation in education with the concepts such as including in education, providing mutual benefits and ensuring the active participation of all students. SP5 drew attention to active participation when describing participation with “*From the expression of participation in education, well, I understand that all the groups of students will be actively involved in, well, the practices to be done in order to ensure quality education.*” In a different perspective, SP4 emphasized equal right to education by ignoring the differences with the expressions of:

“In other words, I understand something like embracing the children no matter what characteristics they have and providing them with the necessary education on an equal basis with all children. So what you're saying right now. Well, I understand being able to provide the equal

and similar education to all the students regardless of their characteristics or differences.”

It has been observed that school principals have the opinion that participation in education is about the inclusion of the child in the school environment. School principals stated that they carried out practices for participation in education such as group activities, communication with the immediate surrounding, parent seminars, in-school workshops and guidance service. SP7 declared that they try to increase participation with larger group activities with:

“The thing I care about since I came is not to restrain the students solely with the class. Let them socialize with other classes. [...] I think this means doing it in larger groups, involving parents and including various occupational groups [...] Well, I care about doing the activities in larger groups instead of restricting them to the class.”

In addition, SP8 voiced that they organize in-school workshops and carry out studies for parents with:

“So we planned to do, well, differentiated and enriched studies regarding this. We have organized workshops with games, sports and music in which they are involved and, well, not excluded. We have performed musical activities in our school at certain times every day. In addition, one of our teachers studied yoga. We thought about practicing yoga in this school environment? Of course it is a little bit funny, but we had yoga practice. [...] Our guidance teacher supported us to a great extent. They were very useful in organizing seminars. We had one-to-one meetings. We had home visits.”

On the other hand, SP6 argued that engaging not only with the students but also with their immediate surrounding would increase their participation in education with:

“Firstly, we organize one-to-one interviews. [...] Secondly, when there is unrest in the class, we work on understanding its causes. [...] We try to scrutinize the problems. [...] So we talk to the child in person. We speak with the parent in person. Sometimes we chat with their neighbours and their immediate surrounding. [...] Their ideas are also valuable for us.”

Considering the activities carried out in the organization, it can be alleged that parental and in-school group activities come to the forefront among those of participation in education.

School principals made suggestions such as providing expert support, creating different educational environments within the school, providing

home education support, holding compulsory parent trainings, providing material and financial support in order to increase participation in education. The SP2 drew attention to the importance of the existence of different learning environments within the organization with:

“To increase participation in education, well, children should be taken out of the classroom environment. It is necessary to bring them to the areas of application. For example, it is necessary to integrate them with soil. You need to meet them with animals. Well, children can express themselves better in these kind of areas, or relevant initiatives can be put into practice by creating different areas within the school which may reveal the individual differences of children, identify their abilities, well, and their differences in this regard.”

SP5, on the other hand, emphasized expert support, financial support and material support: *“Well, our school can be supported in financial matters. Well, parent information seminars can be held by experts on participation in education. They can support us on material issues.”*. In addition, SP3 reported that providing home education support to students would increase participation in education: *“Well, we have individuals with special education needs who are unable to reach the school, or I think we could support those students at home. There may be education support at home. Maybe in groups of two or three, who are unable to attend school.”* It can be asserted that it is a prevalent judgement that financial supports will exclusively increase participation in education.

Findings on the Theme of Support to Education

The codes regarding the opinions of school principals about how they elaborate the theme of support to education, what kind of practices they carry out in their organizations and what can be done for effective implementation were given in Table 4.

It has been observed that school principals elaborate the theme of support to education in terms of financial and moral support to the school and to the parents, holistic support for the children and support to all stakeholders. In this regard, SP3 primarily handled the issue from the point of support to the family:

“When we mention about support to education, first of all, we need to support the family and parents about education. So yes, well, most of our parents really need psychological and economical aids and we have to support them. Let's raise awareness, well, both at home and at school, and then the child will benefit implicitly.”

Table 4. Coding of the Views of School Principals about how They Elaborate the theme of Support to Education, What kind of Practices They Carry out in Their Organizations and What can be done for Effective Implementation

Theme	Sub-Themes	Codes
Support to Education	Elaboration	Supporting the children Financial and moral support to the school and the parents Cooperation Holistic support Support for all stakeholders Support to the family
	Practices in the organizations	Providing financial support to students Cooperating with different institutions Ensuring in-school cooperation Teacher trainings Parent meetings Parental seminars School introduction studies In-school evaluation meetings The presence of different learning environments within the school Need-based support
	How can it be enhanced?	Supporting parents Providing family trainings Providing teacher trainings Increasing the effectiveness of Counselling and Research Centers Providing financial support Improving the physical conditions of the school Improving the professional competencies of teachers Providing expert support Developing skill-based classes Training all staff

In a different way, SP6 referred the types of support to education within this theme:

“Support has two dimensions. So you can think it as financial support. But you can also consider it as individual support or social support. You can interpret it as psychomotor support or cognitive support. You can offer support based on various aspects. I mean, it can also be financial, but what I perceive based on the inclusive education is supporting the students, appealing to the students’ areas of development, nurturing them and shaping their future.”

The school principals perceive support to education in terms of supporting all the stakeholders of education, exclusively the child.

School principals pointed out that they carried out practices in their organizations such as cooperation with different institutions, various kinds of need-based supports, teacher trainings and parental seminars regarding support to education. A principal (SP5) stated that they regularly held evaluation

meetings at their organization and indicated the importance of institutional support: *“Institutional support should be provided. I think that the school should also be provided with institutional support. [...] An informative seminar should be held once a month for especially our teachers about how we can go further.”* In addition, SP10 mentioned about the services provided by the guidance service: *“We apply individual programs in guidance service. In other words, we have one-to-one interviews with parents and students. So it's also effective.”* On the other hand, SP9 declared that they also provided financial support to students as an organization when necessary:

“For support to education in our institution, first of all, you know our schools are with dues. [...] As a support to education, well, we especially enrol the students with unfavourable financial situation free of dues. Just like other students, that is, we ensure that they benefit from the opportunities of education and training under the same conditions, without distinguishing anyone.”

In the theme of support to education, it was observed that practices were primarily carried out to support parents in institutions.

School principals' some suggestions to increase support to education are providing support to parents, family trainings, teacher trainings, financial support, the training of all staff, and the development of skill-based classes. SP9 highlighted that physical conditions and teacher competencies should be improved in order to increase support to education: *“In other words, the physical conditions of the school, the material requirements of the class, the professional competencies of the teachers should be determined and the needs must be met in this way.”* On the other hand, SP4 drew attention to expert support and financial support:

“In other words, trainings with academicians can be provided for parents. That is, we can contact with specialists and experts, and find solutions beyond our potential thanks to their assistance. We are trying to create areas where children will be happier and more peaceful. Actually, we try to create areas in our classrooms and in other parts of the school in that they can express themselves easily. We also experience difficulties in financial matters. Likewise, they need to be improved a bit. It is the case for the families. In other words, the families actually include their children in education based on their own conditions.”

Moreover, SP6 made suggestions in terms of providing professional support to teachers, and transforming and improving the physical conditions of the school to offer different learning areas:

“Well, I can count so much about. First of all, I think all physical class equipment should be planned accordingly. I mean, now, we have to go beyond such in-class education. I think we need to create areas that enable using different areas separately rather than the training provided by the same teacher for five or six hours in the same environment. First and foremost, this. [...] Therefore, I think that the classroom system should be introduced and each area should be transformed into a different workshop. First of all, all the schools must be designed accordingly. [...] and we need to provide the teachers with in-service trainings very quickly, very substantially.”

It was emphasized that financial support should be provided and the physical conditions of schools should be improved at first to make support to education more effective.

Based on the findings, it can be alleged that the organizations have physical and other shortcomings for inclusive education and there are some obstacles for efficiency in the available conditions.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study is contextualized under three main themes: access to education, participation in education and support to education. It was revealed that the participating school principals had an overview regarding these main themes and they adopted some practices in their respective organizations either planned or unplanned. However, they emphasized that there were great many problems regarding inclusive education and many areas to be improved in their own organizations. Although there are different studies on inclusive education in the relevant literature, the lack of those aiming to evaluate inclusive education through the aforementioned components indicates the importance of the present study.

It was found that school principals elaborated quality inclusive early childhood education components through the concepts such as benefiting from the right to education, equal education opportunity, unconditional admission to school, mutual cooperation, removing the obstacles to education, supporting the children. However, it was observed that they could not make satisfactorily clear explanations. Similarly, in a study on teachers, it was found that most of the teachers could not give an adequate and correct definition upon being asked to define inclusive education (Bayram, 2019). Furthermore, the Accessibility Strategy and Action Plan announced by the Prime Ministry Administration for Disabled People in 2010 as “Accessible Action Year for Everyone” also emphasized the importance of accessibility of schools for

individuals to benefit from the right to education regardless of their disability. The document also mentioned that the access to education should not only include physical accessibility but also access to information (Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Administration for Disabled People, 2010). On the other hand, in her study, Demirel Kaya (2019) ascertained that inclusive education was defined as “integration education” in documents and reports created by Turkish Ministry of National Education. Another study suggested an approach that inclusive education should be based on the individual needs of children (Al-Shammari, Faulkner and Forlin, 2019). Based on them, it can be asserted that this study coincides with the available results in terms of a lack of satisfactory perception for the definition of inclusive education.

School principals listed that they had different practices for these components in their organizations such as field scanning, familial seminars, in-school cooperation, financial support for students, resource room, the presence of different learning environments, school introduction studies, transportation facilities and environmental regulations. There are some other research supporting this study in that in-school cooperation and enriched educational environments are significant in order to increase the effectiveness in inclusive education. In a study conducted to reveal the characteristics of inclusive schools, the findings pointing out the importance of in-school collaboration and teamwork for the effectiveness of inclusive education have been extrapolated (Lyons, Thompson and Timmons, 2016). On the other hand, in another study, it was proved that differentiated teaching environments and practices within the classroom are crucial in terms of inclusive education (Bayram, 2019).

School principals have made suggestions such as financial support, material support, improvements in teacher training, improving the professional competencies of teachers, expert support, creating social awareness, compulsory preschool education, creating different educational environments within the organization and collaborating with different institutions in order to increase the practices carried out in their organizations. Similarly, in their study, Berkant and Atılgan (2017) discovered that teachers did not have sufficient level of knowledge for the individuals with special needs in their classes; and therefore, pre-service and in-service teacher trainings should necessarily be provided. In the same study, it was pointed out the importance of conducting familial seminars regarding the problems experienced by the families (Berkant

and Atılğan, 2017). Another study focusing on teacher education in inclusive education pointed to the importance of collaboration between teachers in inclusive education and it was emphasized that a framework plan should be created and students should be included in those plans (Bhroin and King, 2019). The importance of teacher training for more inclusive schools was also emphasized in a study conducted in Australia and China (Carrington, et al., 2015). In a study examining teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Japan and Finland, it was also revealed that teachers should be subjected to additional support and training without being directly exposed to inclusive classes (Moberg, Muta, Korenaga, Kuorelahti and Savolainen, 2019). Similarly, a study conducted in South Korea focused on the necessity of teacher education in inclusive education (Kim, 2014). As a result of the examination of the studies in the literature, it was observed that teacher education was found to be important in terms of the effectiveness of inclusive education in different countries. In addition, in her study, Demirel-Kaya (2019) pointed out that there were no objectives regarding access to education of the students with special needs in the government programs of Turkey. In addition, she concluded that the 18th and 19th National Education Councils made recommendations for making physical arrangements in schools to enable the students with disabilities to access education, and that there were legal regulations in legislation that would allow everyone to access education. Similarly, in the report released by ERG (2016), it was pointed out that the institutions responsible for the children in Turkey have goals such as ensuring physical accessibility and creating social awareness; however, satisfactory concrete steps regarding those objectives have not yet been taken. In another study demonstrating the importance of social awareness in inclusive education, it was highlighted that schools can act more decidedly to carry out inclusive practices if there exists satisfactory community support (Sharma, Loreman and Macanawai, 2016).

The overall examination of the inclusive education literature indicates that teacher trainings are crucial, social awareness should be raised, necessary arrangements and transformations should be made not only in the classroom but also in the school, and there should be parallelism between management policies and the practices. In this study, the organizational practices of school principals to raise awareness of the society about inclusive education and their recommendations for more effective practicability of inclusive education such as financial support, cooperative initiatives, the importance of teacher

education and the enhancement of awareness raising activities for the society are similar to other research results in the literature. From this point of view, the followings can be suggested for the effectiveness of inclusive education.

- Teachers need to undergo professional training on inclusive education.
- Necessary support should be provided to parents with low socio-economic status.
- Necessary physical arrangements and transformations should be provided in schools.
- Expert support should be provided for internal and external stakeholders of the school.
- Active cooperation of the school with different institutions and organizations is required.

Limitations

This research has several limitations. First of all, the research was carried out only in preschool education schools. The research was carried out in schools designated as pilot kindergartens in Gaziantep within the scope of the Inclusive Early Childhood Education Project for Children with Disabilities, carried out in cooperation with UNICEF and the Ministry of National Education. This research was conducted only with school principals.

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