

## Views of the School Principals about the Inclusive Education and Practices

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### Abstract

School principals restructure the school to cope with social changes and needs, fulfill the functions of the school to meet the needs of the society and improve the social quality of the school by providing organizational effectiveness. In this study, it is aimed to reveal the views of the school administrators working at pre-school education institutions and at the primary and secondary schools about the inclusive education. This study is designed as a case study, one of the qualitative research approaches. The participants of the study are the school administrators working at pre-school education institutions and primary and secondary schools in Çankaya and Yenimahalle districts of Ankara. The data were collected using the “Semi-structured interview form” which was developed by the author. The findings of the study indicate that the opinions of the school principals about the inclusive education are generally positive. However, the suggestions of school principals should be taken into account about increasing teachers' knowledge and skills regarding the inclusive education and making objective and impartial educational evaluations and diagnoses

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## INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education in Turkey was started with the decree dated 1983 and numbered 2916, namely the “Law on Children in Need of Special Education”. Inclusive education became much more widespread through the “Decree Law on Special Education” dated 1997 and numbered 573 and through the “Special Education Services Regulation” dated 2000 (Ministry of National Education, [MONE], 2010). Inclusive education is generally considered to be as a multidimensional concept and as a socio-political education model that includes certain values such as human rights, social justice and social equality, but also includes other significant points, including the children’s right in regard to the access to education, their educational rights and school transition process (Kozleski, Artiles & Waitoller, 2011; Loreman, Deppeler & Harvey, 2011; Mitchell, 2005; Slee, 2011; Smith, 2010; Topping, 2012). Akcamete (2009) defines the inclusive education as educational programs in which children with special needs are educated in a part-time or a full-time manner with normally developing children. Akcamete (2009) argues that the definition and scope of inclusive education contain a wide range of issues from the lack of interaction between children with special needs and children with normal development to the participation of children with special needs in general education classrooms through the social and educational activities. In another definition, the inclusive education is regarded as the education of children with and without special needs in general education classes by making necessary arrangements and adaptations, and it is aimed that students who are diagnosed with disabilities receive education together with students with normal development as long as the special education support services are provided (Sucuoglu & Bakkaloglu, 2013). In the Regulation on Special Education Services of the Ministry of National Education (2018) the inclusive education is considered to be a kind of education as a part-time education in special education classes that is provided to individuals with special education needs to interact with other individuals at all levels and to make it possible for them to achieve their educational goals at the highest level, by providing support services to these individuals with their peers.

For successful inclusive education, all school staff, particularly the school principal, should adopt an accepting and supportive attitude towards students with special needs. Children with special needs and their parents frequently interact with the school principal, vice school principal, guidance teachers, other teachers, civil servants and other school personnel, starting from the enrollment stage (Kargin, 2010, p. 64). Therefore, it can be argued that in order to make this interaction genuine cooperation and to practice the inclusive education successfully at schools administrative approach of school administrators and their administrative information and skills are all critical. The duties and responsibilities of the school principals regarding the implementation of special education services at schools are specified in Article 49 of the Ministry of National Education Special Education Services Regulation (2018). In the regulation, some of the duties and responsibilities of the school principals are listed as follows: taking the necessary measures for the provision of special education services for students with special education needs and their parents, and ensuring the formation of the necessary boards and units for the execution of special education services. In addition, the article states that school principals should ensure the cooperation among teachers within the scope of special education service and the work-related health and safety of the staff at the school.

As can be seen, school principals have important roles and responsibilities in the implementation of special education services. It can be argued that these roles and responsibilities should known and practised by school principals in that they will guide the inclusive education at the school. As a matter of fact, the school administrator has to follow the development of the school in terms of its goals. An administrator who does not have the necessary knowledge concerning the educational process cannot report the situation to higher authorities and cannot make a healthy evaluation (Aydin, 1994, p. 191). School principals restructure the school to cope with social changes and needs, fulfill the functions of the school to meet the needs of the society and improve the social quality of the school by providing organizational effectiveness. In other words, school administrators improve the school environment and manages the school’s interaction with its environment (Basaran, 2000, p. 80). They should be familiar with the valid criteria for the selection and continuous evaluation of the desired learning activities and be able to guide those concerned (Aydin, 1994, p. 195). Based on

these definitions, it can be said that school principals are an important building figures in the realization of the goals of the school and meeting the educational needs of all students.

There are many studies dealing with the views of the school principals regarding the inclusive education (Avisar, Reither & Leyser, 2003; Bailey & Plessis, 1997; Balo, 2009; Barnett & Monda Amaya, 1998; Graham & Spandagau, 2011; Jahnukainen, 2015; Mattson & Hansen, 2009; Ramirez, 2006; Salisbury, 2006; Uysal, 1995, Uzun, 2009, Yikilmiş & Sazak Pinar, 2005; Valeo, 2008; Yilmaz Bolat & Ata, 2017). A study was conducted by Uysal (1995) in which the opinions of teachers and school administrators about the problems encountered in the integration of children with intellectual disability were determined. In the study it was found that when students with intellectual disabilities were placed in inclusive classrooms, neither their behavioral nor learning characteristics were adequately described and that the characteristics of the classroom teachers had negative effects as well as positive effects on the inclusion practices. In the study conducted by Uzun (2009), most of the principals reported that the most common problems they experienced were related to the parents of the students with special education needs. In addition, they stated that they had also problems with the parents of other students and with the students requiring special education, and that the class sizes were crowded. Balo (2009) concluded that school administrators are not competent in regard to the implementation of the inclusive education. In the study by Yikilmiş and Sazak Pinar (2005) the views of the school administrators about the inclusive education were analysed and it is found that they do not have sufficient knowledge about the concept of inclusive education, what should be done in order for the inclusive education to be successful. It is also found that most of the school administrators have a negative attitude towards the inclusive education. Yilmaz Bolat and Ata (2017) carried out a study on a sample of twelve school administrators of the pre-school education institutions and the participants emphasized that the inclusive education does not serve its purpose, but it is a useful practice for children with special education needs if appropriate conditions are provided. They also reported that they do not have enough information about the inclusive education, and that professional development is important for both school administrators and teachers suggesting that it should be supported with in-service training. School administrators stated that the students who attend the inclusive education are not socially accepted by teachers, students and parents. They also emphasized the crowded classrooms together with the physical and hardware inadequacy of the school and that the students who are attending the inclusive education have more than one disability which causes various problems in the classrooms. In addition, they offered various suggestions such as conducting in-service training activities, providing personnel and equipment support, including preliminary studies and part-time inclusive education activities in order to successfully implement inclusive education.

Although the first study on the views of the school administrators on the inclusive education in Turkey was carried out in 1995 (Uysal, 1995) the number of such studies is not very high (Uzun, 2009, Yikilmiş & Sazak Pinar, 2005; Yilmaz Bolat & Ata, 2017). It increases the significance of the study. The changes made in the regulation on special education services dated 2006 of the MONE modified the inclusive education practices in the period 2009-2018, and these changes made the school administrators as the sole authority in shaping these educational practices. Another relevant point is the high number of students with special needs who continue inclusive education at the primary and secondary schools. When the data of the Ministry of National Education for the school year 2017-2018 are examined, it is seen that there are 2,601 students in pre-school inclusive education, 105,098 students in primary school inclusive education, 108,753 students in secondary school inclusive education and 41,318 students in secondary inclusive education (MONE, 2018). This situation increases the role and significance of the school administrators working at primary and secondary schools where the number of students in the inclusive education is at the highest level. Therefore, the opinions of school principals, who are responsible for the education of primary and secondary schools, which make up the majority of the number of students attending inclusive education, are important. In this study, it is aimed to reveal the views of the school administrators working at pre-school education institutions and at the primary and secondary schools about the inclusive education. Based on this aim the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the views of the school principles about the inclusive education?

2. What are the views of the school principals about their authority, tasks and responsibility in regard to the inclusive education?

3. What are the major problems that the school principals come across during the inclusive education?

## **METHOD**

### **Design of the study**

The qualitative research is a study in which the data are collected through several methods such as observation, interviews and document analysis, and a qualitative process is followed to reveal the perceptions of individuals and events in a realistic and holistic manner in their natural environment (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). It is a form of research that involves collecting in-depth data about the topic at hand (Gay, 1987). This study is designed as a case study, one of the qualitative research approaches. According to Patton (2014), the case study provides the researcher with a detailed and in-depth data collection process on the subject. In the study the qualitative approach aimed at directly learning the individual perceptions, experiences and perspectives of the participants and understanding and explaining their current situations.

### **Participants**

The participants of the study are the school administrators working at pre-school education institutions and primary and secondary schools in Çankaya and Yenimahalle districts of Ankara. The participants were selected using the criterion sampling technique which is part of the purposeful sampling. Marshall and Rossman (2014) define the criterion sampling as the selection of study participants using a pre-determined criterion. The criterion can be developed by the author, or a list of criterion can be employed. The criteria used in the study are as follows: having at least four years experience of working as a school administrator and having at least one inclusive student at the school. The reason for the first criterion is that school administrators were appointed to the post following the implementation of the Regulation on the Assignment of the Administrators of Educational Institutions affiliated to the Ministry of National Education dated 10 June 2014 which was entered into force on September 2014. It is thought that those school administrators who have at least four years of working experience in the post and who have certain experience in teaching would have sufficient qualifications to express their opinions on education through inclusion. Therefore, a list of schools with students who were attending the inclusive education was obtained from the Counseling Research Centers of the related districts. Six schools were randomly selected from the list of each district, and an appointment was requested from the administrators of the selected schools by telephone. They were informed about the study during the meetings, and they reported that they wanted to contribute to the research and filled out the voluntary consent forms. The direct quotations of their views are given in the article using codes for them such as "SA1, SA2, SA3...". Table 1 presents the demographical information about the school administrators participated in the study.

**Table 1. Demographical information about the school administrators**

Codes	Gender	Type of school	Professional experience (in years)	Experience in the post of school administrator	District	Number of inclusion students
SA 1	Female	Pre-school	15	4	Çankaya	3
SA 2	Female	Pre-school	18	8	Çankaya	1
SA 3	Female	Secondary	21	4	Çankaya	5
SA 4	Male	Primary	32	30	Çankaya	3
SA 5	Male	Primary	38	28	Yenimahalle	7
SA 6	Male	Primary school- Secondary school	24	5	Çankaya	12
SA 7	Male	Secondary	25	5	Yenimahalle	5
SA 8	Male	Primary	31	9	Yenimahalle	5
SA 9	Female	Primary school- Secondary school	41	4	Çankaya	3
SA 10	Male	Primary school- Secondary school	36	18	Yenimahalle	25
SA 11	Male	Primary school	24	15	Yenimahalle	9
SA 12	Male	Primary school- Secondary school	12	8	Yenimahalle	7

Table 1 indicates that four of the participants are female while eight of them are male. In addition, two of them are working at the pre-school education institutions, four at primary schools, two at secondary schools and four at basic education schools which contain both primary and secondary education levels. In regard to the experience of the participants as a school administrator their grouping is given as follows: three of them have four years of experience in this post, dört, two of them have five years of experience in this post, two of them have eight years of experience in this post, one of them has nine years of experience in this post, one of them has fifteen years of experience in this post, one of them has eighteen years of experience in this post, one of them has twenty-eight years of experience in this post and one of them has thirty years of experience in this post. Teaching experience of the participants varies between 12 years and 41 years. The number of students in the inclusion classes at the schools are found as follows: at three schools there are three such students, at three schools there are five such students, at two schools there are seven such students, at one school there is one such student, at one school there are nine such students, at one school there are twelve such students and at one school there are twenty-five such students.

### Data collection tool

The semi-structured interview forms were developed in order to collect data on the views, authorities, duties and responsibilities of school administrators regarding the inclusive education, the problem they experienced in the process of the inclusive education and their suggestions for these problems. For this purpose, five open-ended questions were asked to school principals during the interviews, and a demographic information form was prepared in order to obtain general information about them. The interview form was reviewed by three faculty members working in the field of special education. Based on their feedback, the following item, “What are your duties regarding inclusive education? What is your authority regarding inclusive education? What are your responsibilities in inclusive education?” was rewritten as follows: “What are your views about your authority, tasks and responsibility in regard to the inclusive education?” The questions asked to the school principals are as follows:

1. What are your views about the inclusive education?
2. What are your views about your authority, tasks and responsibility in regard to the inclusive education?
3. What are the major problems that you come across during the inclusive education?

4. How can these problems be solved?
5. What are your views about the successful inclusive education?

The final interview form was used in a pilot study on a sample of three school administrators working at a primary school and at two secondary schools in Nevşehir. They signed a confirmation before the start of the interviews. The findings of the pilot study indicated that interview items are understandable and their contents are consistent with the aims of the study.

### Data analysis

The data were collected in February and March 2019 and recorded using the mobile phone's voice recording application. One of the authors made an appointment by calling them a few days before the interviews. All of the interviews were conducted by one of the authors in the office of the participants. A total of 34 pages of data was obtained from the interviews. Information on the interviews with the school administrators is given in Table 2.

**Table 2. Information on the interviews with the school administrators**

Date	Code of the interviewee	Interview period
22 February 2019	SA1	15 minutes 20 seconds
22 February 2019	SA2	18 minutes 53 seconds
22 February 2019	SA3	13 minutes 08 seconds
23 February 2019	SA4	17 minutes 03 seconds
25 February 2019	SA5	20 minutes 36 seconds
25 February 2019	SA6	17 minutes 11 seconds
25 February 2019	SA7	10 minutes 25 seconds
01 March 2019	SA8	16 minutes 06 seconds
01 March 2019	SA9	09 minutes 22 seconds
04 March 2019	SA10	15 minutes 58 seconds
04 March 2019	SA11	10 minutes 49 seconds
04 March 2019	SA12	17 minutes 39 seconds

As can be seen in Table 2 the interviews were conducted between 22 February 2019 and 04 February 2019. Except for in 23 February 2019 and in 01 March 2019 the interviews were made with three participants each day. The shortest interview period is 09 minutes 22 seconds whereas the longest interview period is 20 minutes 36 seconds.

The data were analyzed with the content analysis, one of the qualitative data analysis techniques. The data obtained with the voice recording program of the mobile phone were numbered depending on the order in which the interviews were made without any changes, and were transformed into a transcription by giving a code to the school administrators. During this process each voice in the recording was written. Before the data analysis, three of randomly selected interview recordings (at least 25% of the data) were listened to by the author and a faculty member working in the special education department, and the written forms of the recordings were verified. The reliability was found to be 100%. The data set was developed to include a descriptive index. On the right side of the document there were the interpretations of the participants and on the bottom of it there were additional information. The data set was organized and divided into themes and coded. The themes developed were reviewed by a faculty member working in the special education department. This review also included the coding files, and the sub-themes related to the two data sets randomly selected. The themes that were agreed by the author and the interrater were left unchanged, and the themes of disagreement were discussed. At the end all consensus was achieved.

## FINDINGS

The findings of the study were presented by taking into account the themes and sub-themes that emerged as a result of the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews conducted with the school administrators.

### Views of the school administrators about the inclusive education

The views of the school administrators about the inclusive education are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. Views of the school administrators about the inclusive education**

Theme	Sub-theme	f
Views	Positive	9
	Negative	3
Total		12

As Table 3 indicates of twelve participants nine have positive views about the inclusive education while the remaining three have negative about it. One of the participants, SA3, reported the following positive views: *“I am very keen on inclusive education because I think it is the education that every individual can benefit from.”* Another participant’s, SA4, views about the inclusive education are as follows: *“I am very positive about inclusive education. I believe that a lot of attention should be given to the inclusive education in every institution, especially in educational institutions.”* The views of the participant SA1 are given as follows: *“I believe that no matter what disability the children have and regardless of the degree of their disability, I believe that they should definitely be in the same environment with their peers.”* Another positive views were reported by the participant SA10 as follows: *“The inclusive education is a must. I also like the term “inclusive”.”*

One of the participants, SA2, reported the following negative views about the inclusive education: *“I do not have very favorably views concerning the inclusive education in kindergarten or pre-school education. The reason for this is that the Ministry of National Education does not provide support staff and kindergarten teachers show incredible resistance to the inclusive education.”* Similarly, SA5 has negative views about it: *“Since we have been functioning as a primary and secondary school for many years, we more or less know the practices related to the inclusive education. However, we cannot achieve efficiency in it. In fact, there is no inclusive education at the school. Therefore, I can not look very positively at it in this respect.”* A third participant, SA12, expressed the following negative views about the inclusive education: *“I do not believe that public schools can offer inclusive education correctly.”*

### Views of the participants about their tasks in regard to the inclusive education

The views of the participants about their tasks in regard to the inclusive education are given in Table 4.

**Table 4. Views of the participants about their tasks**

Theme	Sub-themes	f
Views about tasks	Preparing the students in inclusion classes for the adaptation process	1
	Asking the teachers to implement the individualized education plans	2
	Helping the students in inclusion classes during the enrollment in schools	1
	Warning teachers about the approach to inclusive students	1
	Facilitating the inclusive education at schools	1
	Enabling the inclusive students to receive supportive education	3
	We do not have enough information about it	1
	No idea	1
	Carrying out all the work and procedures related to the enrollment of the mainstreaming students	1
	Distributing the students with special education needs to classes	1
	Solving problems encountered with parents	1

Provision of a better classroom environment for inclusive students	1
Being able to integrate the student in inclusive classes with their peers	1
Organizing the inclusive education	1
Preparing suitable educational environments for inclusive students	1
Preparing the necessary materials for inclusive education	1
Acting with the school guidance service	1

Table 4 shows that three participants reported their task in regard to the inclusive education as enabling the inclusive students to receive supportive education. Two of them stated that asking the teachers to implement the individualized education plans is one of their tasks concerning the inclusive education. The other tasks reported by the school administrators are found as follows: Preparing the students in inclusion classes for the adaptation process; helping the students in inclusion classes during the enrollment in schools; warning teachers about the approach to inclusive students; facilitating the inclusive education at schools; acting with the school guidance service; preparing the necessary materials for inclusive education; organizing the inclusive education; provision of a better classroom environment for inclusive students; solving problems encountered with parents; carrying out all the work and procedures related to the enrollment of the mainstreaming students; distributing the students with special education needs to classes; being able to integrate the student in inclusive classes with their peers and preparing suitable educational environments for inclusive students. In addition, one of the participants reported that he does not know his tasks very well concerning the inclusive education whereas the other one stated that he has no idea about it.

The views of the participant SA7 are given as follows: *“Sometimes, our students in inclusive classes request special support education. In this support education, I make sure that they can receive support training by considering school opportunities.”* The participants, SA11 and SA6, reported the following views, respectively: *“First of all, planning support programs for the implementation of support trainings.”* and *“To persuade teachers to provide supportive training.”* The views of SA1 and SA9 are as follows: *“I want IEPs to be implemented”* and *“We have to ensure that the IEP plans are implemented.”*

Another participant, SA1, reported *“We have a duty to prepare the mainstreaming students for the integration process.”* The participant SA3 stated *“I think it is our primary duty to enroll all children with inclusive education needs to our school.”* the participant SA12 reported their task is *“To prepare suitable educational environments for these children.”*

#### **Views of the school administrators about their authorities in the inclusive education**

Table 5 presents the views of the school administrators about their authorities in the inclusive education.

**Table 5. Views of the school administrators about their authorities**

Theme	Sub-themes	f
Views about authority	We are not authorized to choose teachers	1
	Our powers are limited	1
	I do not know anything about it	1
	We do not know the limits of our authority	1

Table 5 shows that the participants reported various statements about their authority in regard to the inclusive education practices: Our powers are limited; we do not know the limits of our authority and we are not authorized to choose teachers. For instance, the participant SA4 stated the following: *“In particular, we should have the authority to find qualified personnel. We should have the chance to find and choose qualified teachers. In this sense, I do not see myself and other teachers as competent.”* Another participant’s, SA5, views on this topic are as follows: *“Our powers are limited. There is a belief that a special education student may attend any school he wants, but there are some complications. First, the student may attend a school in a district where his parents reside. If*



*there is no school in his own district, that is, he cannot be placed in a class, he can request to attend a school in another district. But the parents do not follow these steps. Instead, they think that my child should attend this school so I can send him there. However, we are obliged to accept these students.”* The views of the participant SA1 are given as follows: *“Students come to the school with or without a diagnosis. They want to enroll at the school. We either admit those children to the school based the conditions of the school or we cannot. If there is no other inclusion student in the class, we can not admit the student. The legislation does not exactly tell us to do in such conditions or that I do not know, if there are data about numbers.”* Another participant, SA9, reported the following views: *“We do not know how far we are authorized in this regard. There seems to be no clear distinction concerning it. I wonder how far is our authority? We do our job without challenging it.”*

### **Views of the school administrators about their responsibility in the inclusive education**

Table 6 presents the views of the school administrators about their responsibility in the inclusive education.

**Table 6. Views of the school administrators about their responsibility**

Theme	Sub-theme	f
Views on responsibility	Responsibility in regard to teacher training	1
	Responsibility in regard to students	1
	We do not know	1
	Conscientious responsibility	1

Table 6 shows that the participants produced several views about their responsibility based on distinct topics, including responsibility in regard to students and teacher training. One of the participants reported that he does not know anything about such responsibilities. Another one talked about conscientious responsibility concerning the inclusive education. The participant SA2 reported the following views: *“We, the administrators, have a great responsibility in this regard. It is the responsibility of school administrators to include them in an inclusive class and to allow for them to continue their studies.”* The participant SA4 explained the topic as follows: *“These children also have the right to learn. It is always necessary to pave the way for them to receive this education at every school. As school administrators, our responsibility is to ensure that these children receive education at our schools.”* Another participant SA3 stated the following views: *“I believe that in the last decade there have been improvements in the inclusive education in Turkey, but school administrators and teachers do not think they know enough on the subject of their duties and responsibilities.”* The views of the participant SA9 are as follows: *“Our responsibility is great. These children should not be sufferers. First of all we have a conscientious responsibility towards them.”*

### **Views about the problems faced during the inclusive education**

The views of the participants about the problems faced during the inclusive education are presented in Table 7

**Table 7. Views about problems**

Theme	Sub-theme	f
Problems	Problems related to measurement and diagnosis	8
	Problems caused by school administrators	2
	Problems caused by teachers	12
	Parental problems	12
	Problems caused by the physical conditions at schools	3
	Problems caused by the inability to provide support services	3

As can be seen in Table 7 nearly all participants reported that the problems experienced during the inclusive education are due to teachers and parents. There are other participants who reported such problems based on diagnosis and assessment activities, the physical conditions at schools, the lack of

support services and school administrators. For instance, the participant M11 who considered the diagnosis and assessment activities as the source of problems reported the following views:

*“Sometimes there are students who have to go to a special education class under the name of inclusion. These students damages the routines of the classes. It can be explained as follows: They are preventing their peers from studying. Turkey has improved the inclusive education, but there are actually 24 students in our inclusion classes. This number is far below the existing one. Because there are students who are included in the special education classes even though there should be placed there.”*

Another participant MA5 who also considered the diagnosis and assessment activities as the source of problems reported the following views: *“We have trouble with diagnoses. Sometimes we found that children who are called inclusion students are not inclusive, but we have seen that children who are said to be not inclusive students, can be in fact inclusive students.”* The views of the participant SA3 are as follows: *“Twenty of the thirty forty students who attend our school have nothing to do with inclusion.”* The participant SA8 reported the following views: *“There are things that are overlooked in the evaluations. Those students with higher levels of disability are evaluated as inclusion students. I think such decisions have been made without sufficient examination.”* The views of the participants SA3 are as follows: *“I do not think that the guidance research centers do their task properly and that our students pass through the analysis at these centers without being objectively and sufficiently examined. Because sometimes we witness such events that the diagnosis of the doctors and the diagnosis of these centers contradict. I have been faced with too many such events.”*

The participant SA5 emphasized the problems that occur due to the school administrators and reported the following views: *“Unfortunately, some of school administrators are not aware of their legal duties and responsibilities in this regard. They do not want to enroll inclusive students into their schools. I think the problem starts from here.”* Another participant SA12 also emphasized the school administrator-based problems and expressed the following: *“School administrators do not want to admit these children to their schools.”*

As stated above nearly all participants reported that the problems experienced during the inclusive education occur due to teachers. Table 8 presents the views of the participants about the teacher-related problems in the inclusive education.

**Table 8. Teacher-related problems**

Theme	Sub-theme	f
Problems	Not accepting inclusive students	2
	Inadequacy of the methods and techniques teachers employ	1
	Focus more on academic achievement	1
	Being prejudiced	2
	Excluding inclusive students	1
	Not giving the necessary time for inclusivestudents	1
	Failure to evaluate the inclusive students in accordance with the Individualized Education Plans	2
	Perceiving the practices of the Ministry on inclusive education as unnecessary	1

As can be seen in Table 8 the participants reported several problems relating them with the teachers. For instance, the views of SA1 are as follows: *“If there is prejudice in the teacher, whatever the situation of the child, there is a difficulty from the beginning. Otherwise, if the teacher is completely positive, it is much easier from the beginning.”* Another participant SA2 stated the following: *“Teachers show an incredible resistance to admit the inclusive students in their classrooms.”*

*I persuade them to accept such students.*” The views of SA3 are as follows: *“Unfortunately, teachers do not want inclusive students in their class. I think that's the biggest problem.”* The participant SA8 expressed the following views: *“I do not want to give inclusive students to some teachers. Because some of our teachers exclude or do not give the necessary time to these students.”*

The participant SA4 explained the problems related to teachers as follows: *“The teachers do not want the inclusive students in the class. He does not look at them warmly.”* Another one, SA5, reported the following: *“First of all, the state should use force or give a serious response to the teachers who do not accept these children in their class.”*

All of the school administrators participated in the study stated that the problems experienced in inclusive education are mostly caused by the parents. These problems arising from parents are grouped under two sub-themes: problems arising from the parents of the students with normal development and the parents of the students in the inclusive classes. The views of the participants about these two categories are presented in Tables 9 and 10.

**Table 9. Problems arising from the parents of the students with normal development**

Theme	Sub-theme	f
Parent-related problems	Not wanting any inclusive student in the class	3
	Not being sensitive	1

In Table 9, it is seen that three of the school administrators stated that the parents of the students with normal development did not want inclusive students to continue their education in their children’s class, and one of them stated that these parents were not sensitive to the others. For instance, the participant SA2 stated *“Other parents may have reactions. They do not want to see their children in the same group with inclusive students.”* Another one, SA8, reported *“However, thirty percent of the parents who do not have children with special needs have a negative view of these students, and there are parents with negative thoughts who argue that these students should not be in these classroom environments because these students disrupt the classroom environment.”*

**Table 10. Problems related to the parents of the students in the inclusive classes**

Theme	Sub-themes	f
Parent-related problems	Not acknowledging their children's incompetence	3
	Not being convinced about the educational evaluation and diagnostic process	3
	Not following the recommendations	1

In Table 10, it is seen that three of the school administrators stated that the parents of students with special needs did not accept the incompetence of their children. Three of the participants argued that these parents were not convinced about the educational evaluation and diagnosis process, and one participant stated that the parents did not comply with the recommendations.

For instance, the participant SA9 produced the following views: *“The biggest problem in inclusive education is that it is difficult for the parents to accept their child's condition until the diagnosis is made.”* Another participant SA2 argued *“Also, in some cases, the parents do not accept the situation of their child. When they cannot accept the situation, there occurs a communication problem between teachers and parents.”*

The views of the participants SA10 are as follows: *“Despite our guidance, parents do not go to the doctor. Instead, the teacher fills a form. The counselor is dealing with the situation. We show these documents to the parent. Despite this, the parents do not want to send their child to the doctor. There are parents we convince, but there are also those who are not.”* The participant SA11 argued *“It is a big problem to get the parent to accept the*

*situation of their child and to convince them to apply for the guidance research center. Our counselors suffer from this problems.”*

The views of the participant SA10 are as follows: *“Sometimes there are parents who do not want to follow the doctor’s recommendations about their children. They do not go to the doctor again. There may be parents who do not follow the advice of the doctor or the counselor and make inferences on their own.”*

### **Solutions to the problems experienced in the inclusive education**

Table 11 presents the solutions developed by the participants to the problems experienced in the inclusive education

**Table 11. Solutions developed by the participants to the problems experienced in the inclusive education**

Theme	Sub-theme	f
Solutions	Increasing teachers’ knowledge and skills regarding inclusive education	10
	Providing necessary trainin and consultancy services to parents	2
	Objective and impartial educational evaluations and diagnoses	5
	Improving the cooperation between school counseling service, school administrator and teacher	2
	Establishing appropriate physical environments at schools	2
	Making and implementing individualized education plans in accordance with their purpose	1
	Making pre-school education compulsory	1
	Making arrangements for support training	1

Table 11 shows that 10 of the school administrators participated in the study presented the increase of teachers’ knowledge and skills regarding the inclusive education as a solution. Five of them suggested that the educational evaluations and diagnoses should be made objectively and impartially whereas two of them suggested the provision of parents with the necessary education and counseling services. Another two participants suggested that the school counseling services should be in cooperation with school administrators and teachers, and the other two of them argued that there should be appropriate physical environments at schools. One participant argued that the IEPs should be designed and implemented in accordance with their purpose, while another one of them suggested that pre-school education should compulsory. Yet another one proposed arrangements for supportive education as a solution. For instance, the participant SA2 argued *“I think the state should raise awareness of teachers on this issue. For example, since I attend seminars on autism, I can look more favorably at children with differences.”* Another participant, SA3, expressed the following views: *“First of all, teachers need to be trained on this subject, it is necessary to explain them the purpose of the inclusive education.”* Another participant, M4, stated *“All teachers should be given adequate training on this subject.”* The participant, SA5 reported *“Teachers need extensive training in this regard.”* and SA6 stated *“I want teachers who teach the inclusive students to participate in-service training activities.”*

The participant SA6 emphasized the significance of objective diagnosis of children and stated *“Tanılamalarda uzman kişilerle birlikte öğretmenlerin de bulunması gerekir”* The views of the participants SA11 and SA12 are as follows, respectively: *“Diagnoses should not be left to the parents’ request.”* and *“The inclusive students who will be sent to schools by the guidance research centers should be eligible for receiving education at that school.”* Another participant, SA10 reported the following: *“Guidance research centers need to develop objective and correct assessments about the children.”*

The school administrator, SA3, offering suggestions for the provision of necessary education and counseling services to parents stated *“Parents should be made conscious about the topic.”* Another participant, SA7, suggested the following: *“It would be beneficial to raise the awareness of parents and to increase their awareness about inclusive education.”* The

participant SA3 argued *“The guidance service and the school administration should work in cooperation and harmony.”* and another participant SA9 reported the following: *“Counseling teachers and teachers of inclusive classes should work collaboratively.”* The participant SA2 reported the following views emphasizing the need for the improvement of the physical conditions at schools: *“For example, our school is a five-classroom school and the whole area is that. We reorganized the tiny library as a support education room. We can also make the school principal’s room a support education room. OK we did it. Well, we also have some administrative work to do. Where should we do them? The deputy director and the officer are in the same room. We have nowhere to meet. Where will you do your administrative affairs? It depends on fully physical conditions of the schools.”*

The participant SA1 argued that physical conditions at the school should be improved and added the following: *“For example, the kindergarten where I work now has two floors as you can see. You can go up to the ground floor by stairs. Again, there is a ladder inside the school. There is currently no physically disabled student at the school, but we may have in the future. If a physically disabled student attends this school and has a wheelchair, it will be very difficult for him to get into the school. The dining hall is downstairs, and there is a multi-purpose hall on the same floor. It would very difficult for such students to get down there. How can we help children in this regard? Since children are physically small, we can move them to these areas.”*

### Views about the effective inclusive education

Table 12 presents the views of the school administrators about the effective inclusive education.

**Table 12. Views of the school administrators about the effective inclusive education**

Theme	Sub-themes	f
Effective inclusive education	Working with experienced and expert staff	3
	Proper classroom management	1
	Improvement of the social activities in and out of school	3
	Increased the time allocated to mainstream students and individualized education	1
	Informing the school staff about inclusive education	1
	Monitoring the development of students in inclusive classes	1
	Making the school environment compatible with the inclusive education	4
	Increasing the authority of school administrators and teachers in regard to the inclusive education	1

As can be seen in Table 12, four of the school administrators stated that the school environment should be made compatible with the inclusive education. There are three participants who suggested that working with experienced and expert staff will produce successful inclusive education. The other three participants argued that improvement of the social activities in and out of school would contribute to have efficient inclusive education activities. Each of the following suggestions is reported by one participant: using the proper classroom management practices, increased the time allocated to mainstream students and individualized education, informing the school staff about inclusive education, monitoring the development of students in inclusive classes and increasing the authority of school administrators and teachers in regard to the inclusive education.

For four of the participants the effective inclusive education is possible only when the school environment is consistent with it. For instance, SA9 reported the following views: *“Materials for students in inclusive classes need to be enriched.”* Another participant, SA11, argued *“The environment must be prepared, and the systems approach must be adopted. School administrators must be well prepared.”* The participant SA3 emphasized the necessity of “experienced and expert personnel” for the successful inclusive education: *“Students should act together with their peers, but I think the efficiency of education will increase with the effects of trained staff.”* Similarly, SA4

suggested the following: *“We and teachers need to be better equipped and specialized concerning the inclusive education.”*

Concerning the effective inclusive education three participants suggested the improvement of social activities in and out of the school. For instance, the SA8 reported the following views: *“I think social relations outside of school should be developed between the parents of the inclusion students and the parents of other students. In addition, inclusion students should be included more in social activities.”* Another participant, SA10, stated *“Objectives given to the inclusive students should be clearly defined, and classroom activities should be organized around these objectives.”*

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In this section, the findings obtained from the interviews with the school administrators are discussed under the themes within the framework of the findings reported in the previous studies.

### **Views about the inclusive education**

When the findings of the study are evaluated, it is seen that the opinions of the school principals about the inclusive education are generally positive. It can be said that this situation is very positive for the education of students with special needs. Because they have a status that can direct all educational processes of the school and manage these processes effectively and efficiently. When the negative views of the participants are taken into consideration, it is understood that this situation is actually caused by the current problems of the inclusive education in practice. As a matter of fact, the school principals with negative opinions emphasized problems such as the lack of readiness of teachers, the lack of supportive education environments, and insufficiency of physical conditions at schools. These findings of the study differ from the findings reported by Ruined and Pinar Sazak (2005). Their results revealed that the school administrators attitudes towards the inclusive education are negative and that they do not have sufficient knowledge about the inclusion. In the findings of this study, most of the school principals showed a positive approach towards the inclusive education. This difference may have resulted from the process by the introduction of the Special Education Services Regulation published in 2006 and the special education policies followed. In addition, the circular numbered 2008/60 "Education Practices through Integration" was published four months after the publication of the regulation and has become an important regulation regarding the measures to be taken at schools and institutions by school administrators and teachers. In addition, it can be said that the Why, Why, How Inclusion (3N Inclusion) guide sent to schools by the Ministry of National Education regarding the inclusive education practices is an important resource guide for school administrators, teachers and parents. Apart from these, the amendments made in the Constitution, legal regulations on access rights of individuals with special needs, trainings given to school administrators and teachers on special education and inclusion, awareness studies of non-governmental organizations may have caused a positive difference in this process. Lastly, the circular entitled "Education Practices Through Integration / Inclusion" numbered 28 published on 19 September 2017 and the Special Education Services Regulation published on 7 July 2018 may have increased the sensitivity or awareness of school administrators about the inclusive education. Although this process is very positive, it is thought that it is necessary to monitor how the positive attitudes and knowledge of the school principals are transmitted into the educational practices, and the systematic continuation of guidance and supervision activities at schools should be ensured.

### **Views about tasks, authority and responsibility**

When the opinions of the school administrators regarding their duties, authorities and responsibilities towards the inclusive education are considered, it is seen that there are different views about these points. The school administrators stated that it is among their duties to ensure that students with special needs receive supportive education and to ask teachers to implement Individualized Education Plans. It is also seen that a common job description is not expressed by the participants, and their views differ. However, in the 49th article of the Special Education Services Regulation (2018)

issued by the Ministry of National Education the duties and responsibilities of the school administrators regarding the implementation of special education services are governed by four articles. Considering these items, the duties and responsibilities of school administrators include taking the necessary steps regarding the provision of special education services for students with special education needs and their parents, establishing the necessary committees and units for the implementation of special education services and ensuring that they fulfill their duties and responsibilities in relation to the special education services for the teachers in the school. All staff at the school should work in cooperation and in an environment in which work-related health and safety are provided. Although the school administrators participated in the study do not make a definition similar to the statements given in the regulation, it can be said that their opinions coincide with the legal definition in many ways. For instance, the school administrators participated in the study emphasized the significance of the training to be offered to students with special needs in inclusive classes which was seen by them among their duties and responsibilities regarding inclusive education practices. However, they did not mention a duty such as heading the Individualized Education Program Development Unit or assigning one of the relevant deputy directors to the head of this unit. However, the Individualized Education Program Development Unit has a vital importance in providing quality education services to individuals with special needs, and the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) of the children with special needs should be developed by this unit. Only one principal stated that asking teachers to develop the IEPs is one of their duties. However, in the Article 47 of the Special Education Services Regulation, published by the Ministry of National Education on July 7, 2018, it is stated that the IEP unit would meet headed by the school administrator or by any other personnel appointed by the school administrator. From this point of view, given that the participants do not mention such a duty, it is possible to argue that the school administrators do not have sufficient information about their authorities. Similarly, very few of the school principals expressed their views on their authority. On the other hand, those participants who expressed their opinions in this regard stated that they did not know their authorities or that their authorities were limited. The findings also differ in many respects from the results reported in the study by Yilmaz Bolat and Ata (2017) which was conducted on a sample pre-school education school administrators. The results reported in the study conducted by Yilmaz Bolat and Ata (2017) indicate that school administrators have a task of providing guidance and organizing educational environments. In addition, the participants of the study stated that preparing the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) are among their duties. However, in the findings of this study, it is seen that the school administrators do not express any opinion on the preparation of the IEPs. Based on these findings of the study, it can be said that the school administrators have limited information about their duties, authorities and responsibilities regarding the inclusive education.

### **Views about the problems experienced in the inclusive education**

When the opinions of the school administrators regarding the problems experienced in the inclusive education are evaluated, a remarkable issue emerges: all school administrators see teachers and parents as the major source of the problems. It is seen that the main problems arising from teachers include that they are not accepting inclusive students, they are prejudiced against these students and they are not making evaluations in accordance with the Individualized Education Plans. It can be said that these findings are important for the inclusive education. As a matter of fact, it is stated in the related studies that it is important for teachers to be accepting and to have a positive attitude to students with special needs to achieve the successful inclusive education (Batu, 2000; Battal, 2007; Sahbaz, 1997; Temir, 2002). Ataman (1996) states that teachers are a very important factor that can affect children in inclusion programs and that all children should feel the teachers' positive attitude in an inclusive class. When the findings of the study regarding the problems caused by the parents of inclusive education are evaluated, it is seen that these problems are caused by both parents of students with normal development and those of students with special needs. The participants' perception of parents as the source of problems is similar to the findings of the study conducted by Uzun (2009). In the results of the study conducted by Uzun (2009), most of the school administrators stated that the most common problems they experienced were related to the parents of the students with special needs and the families of other students. Considering these findings, it is understood that the primary

problem arising from the parents of students with normal development is that these parents do not want inclusive students in the classroom. The main problems arising from the parents of students with special needs is that they do not readily accept their children's inadequacies and cannot be persuaded to join the educational evaluation and diagnosis process. These results are similar to the results reported in the study conducted by Kocyigit (2015). The study revealed that parents do not accept the situation of their children in need of special education, parents' participation in the process is limited, and parents of students with normal development exhibit behaviors of not accepting students who attend inclusive classes. Experiencing these negative situations will negatively affect the success of the inclusive education. In this process, parents should be supported by school administrations in a planned and programmed manner, and their lack of knowledge and skills related to inclusive education should be eliminated.

### **Suggestions to eliminate the problems in the inclusive education**

When the suggestions of school principals regarding the problems experienced in inclusive education are evaluated, it is seen that the school administrators mostly offer suggestions about increasing teachers' knowledge and skills regarding the inclusive education and making objective and impartial educational evaluations and diagnoses. The suggestions by the participants to increase teachers' knowledge and skills related to the inclusive education are consistent with the findings reported in previous studies (Anilan & Kayacan, 2015; Akalin, 2015; Atay, 1995; Babaoglan & Yilmaz, 2010; Battal, 2007; Diken, 1998; Gokdere, 2012; Guven, 2009; Kargin, Acarlar & Sucuoglu 2003; Kaya, 2005; Kuz, 2001; Onder, 2007; Ozbaba, 2000; Sanır, 2009; Temir, 2002; Unal, 2010; Yikmiş & Bahar, 2002; Yilmaz, 2015). The results of the studies revealed that teachers have incomplete knowledge and skills about inclusive education. The suggestions of the school administrators regarding educational evaluation and diagnosis should be taken into consideration. In fact, the results of this study revealed that there are problems arising from educational evaluation and diagnosis of the children with special needs. A similar finding is reported in the study by Uysal (1995). In the study in which the opinions of teachers and school administrators about the problems encountered in the inclusion of children with intellectual disability were analysed, it was concluded that none of the behavior and learning characteristics of students with intellectual disabilities were adequately diagnosed when they were placed in inclusive classes. The educational evaluation and diagnosis process is a process that directly affects the education of students with special needs and determines the appropriate educational environments they will receive. This process should be continued based on the competence and ability of the individual as much as possible. As a matter of fact, in the fifth article of the Special Education Services Regulation issued by the Ministry of National Education lists the basic principles of special education, and it is stated that education services should be provided by taking into account individual differences, developmental characteristics and training needs.

School administrators also offered some suggestions such as developing school counseling services and the cooperation between school administrators and teachers, creating appropriate physical environments at schools, making and implementing individual education plans in accordance with their purpose, making preschool education compulsory, making arrangements for supportive education activities and providing necessary training and counseling services to parents. It can be said that these suggestions also indicate the current problems of the inclusive education. Therefore, these suggestions should be taken into consideration and reflected into the inclusive education practices.

### **Views about effective inclusive education**

When the views of the school administrators about the effective inclusive education are taken into consideration, it is seen that there are different views about it. The frequently expressed views in this regard include the preparing the school environment, working with experienced and expert staff, and increasing social activities in and out of school. These findings are similar to the previous findings reported by Bilen (2007) and Sanır (2009). The results in the study by Bilen (2007) indicate that the unsuitability of the physical environment at the school and the classroom and insufficient qualified



personnel in the field of special education were mentioned as negative factors that prevent a successful inclusion education. The results reported in the study by Sanır (2009) reveal that the failure to make the necessary arrangements for the students in inclusive classes prevents these students from fully participating in the education process and therefore, the desired results from the inclusive education cannot be achieved.

Although it was stated by only one school administrator that the time allocated to students in inclusive classes should be increased and the education should be individualized, this opinion is considered to be very important. In the study by Gurgur, Kıs and Akcamete (2012), the opinions of the pre-service teachers about the individual support services offered to the students in inclusive classes were examined. The study concluded that individual support services improve the academic success of students in inclusive classes and contribute to the development of their social skills.

In conclusion, based on the findings obtained from this study, it can be stated that the positive approach of school principals concerning the inclusive education is a positive development in terms of the success of inclusive education. Considering the current problems of the inclusive education in Turkey, it is thought that the findings obtained from this study are important. For this reason, it is necessary to conduct similar studies with more participants, and future studies should focus on the opinions of secondary school principals on the inclusive education due to the fact that the compulsory education is 12 years in Turkey.

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