



## Teachers' Opinions on Inclusive Education\*

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to determine the opinions of teachers working in the city of Kastamonu towards inclusive education and to investigate what inclusive education practices are. For this purpose this research was conducted from a qualitative perspective. The study group consists of thirteen teachers from various branches working in the province of Kastamonu. While collecting data, the semi-structured questionnaire form of the correspondence technique, which is one of the qualitative data collection techniques, was used. The questionnaire consists of two parts, including the Personal Information Form and questions related to the purpose of the research. The responses of the participants to the teacher correspondence questionnaire were evaluated in the context of the content and the findings of the study were collected in five dimensions; inclusive education approach, what teachers should do, teacher practices, school policies to be applied and policies to be applied across the country. In the research, it was observed that teachers had a general idea about inclusive education, but they were also associated with the education of people with disabilities. Teachers mostly stated that they provided education according to individual differences. They stated that the physical environment should be regulated in schools and in-service trainings should be provided nationwide. As a result of this research suggested that in-service trainings should be organized in addition to inclusive training for teachers.

#### Keywords:

Inclusion, Inclusive Education, Teachers' Opinions, Qualitative Research

### 1. Introduction

Children exposed to exclusion due to income status, place of residence, ethnicity, immigration, disability status and gender are referred to as disadvantaged children. The educational practices recommended for disadvantaged children are determined as inclusive education in the literature. According to the view that lies in the philosophy of inclusive education, disadvantaged children will be able to continue their education life by providing qualified education in schools where inclusive education practices are adopted and it will be possible to ensure that they are brought into society. The core of its inclusive education is human rights and an approach to equal education for all. Inclusive education is an approach that started with the separation of special needs from past to present and then evolved into inclusion and integration and ultimately used as an inclusive education approach. This approach is different from the mainstream model of inclusive education include all students. All students are children who are exposed to exclusion due to income status, place of residence, ethnicity, immigration, disability and gender. While only those who are mainstreaming students can benefit from a individualized education for the last thirty years, the children of families with low income, from different cultures and immigrants who are disadvantaged in the society could not have more and specially planned education. In other hands, access to education of children in the world and Turkey is a pivotal issue in dropping out of school as a major problem. According to UNICEF, 57 million children in the world are deprived of access to education for various reasons (UNICEF, 2013). Unlike

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inclusive education, it is not only developed for children who need special education, but also includes education of all disadvantaged children. In addition, while mainstreaming focuses on student exchange, there is a school-based change in inclusive education (Rakap, 2018). In this context, inclusive education represents a broader perspective compared to mainstreaming. Many definitions have been made in the literature on the inclusive approach. This is because the inclusive education philosophy is versatile and includes many factors (Gürdür, 2019). Buna rağmen According to the definition of UNESCO all students can access and fully participate in learning, supported by reasonable accommodation and teaching strategies designed to meet their individual needs. (UNESCO, 2019).

While explaining the concept of inclusive education, it is stated in the literature that it is built on access, participation and support components (DEC-NAEYC, 2009). In this context, the concept of access is explained as bringing the student with special needs to the highest quality education. The concept of participation is to ensure that the student with special needs actively participate in a high-quality learning environment. The concept of support is explained as supporting inclusive education and providing all infrastructures including experts, families and managers. While adopting inclusive education, teachers have important roles. Some of these are highlighted in the literature as instructional arrangements, physical arrangements, keeping in-class records, effective collaboration and quality communication should be adapted to curriculum (Yılmaz, Uysal & Koç, 2019). Among the physical arrangements of the classroom, arrangements such as providing plenty of natural light, providing a space free from distractions, placing the mainstreaming student close to her and providing technology support can be listed (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2010). In addition, dividing homework into small steps, getting peer assistance, giving worksheets, making text adaptations according to the student's level, giving additional time to the student, supporting with resource books and materials are among the educational arrangements and curriculum adaptations (Reid ve Green, 2018). In addition to these, keeping records by making classroom observations and being in effective communication with students are among the important roles of classroom teachers (Ministry of National Education Special Education and Rehabilitation Center Special Learning Disabilities Support Education Program, 2008). These responsibilities and roles are also seen to be related to the qualifications of the educators. This research has been started by wondering what teachers' views and practices regarding inclusive education which emerged as a comprehensive and basic understanding of education worldwide. In this study, it was aimed to examine the opinions of teachers working in the province of Kastamonu towards inclusive education and to investigate what inclusive education practices are.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Research Design**

In this study, was aimed to determine the teachers' views and to investigate what practices they did regarding inclusive education. For this purpose this research was conducted from a qualitative perspective. In the abstract, qualitative research is a inductive and deductive way of reasoning in a natural environment using multiple methods in which the researcher is a tool (Creswell, 2012). Besides this, with qualitative research, researchers try to make sense of them by interpreting the concepts they create in people's minds. (Merriam, 2013). The qualitative pattern fits the spirit of the study, as this research aims to define teachers' views on inclusive education. This research is a basic qualitative research in which data is collected by correspondence technique. In the correspondence technique, the data are collected by written communication tools. The most commonly used correspondence technique is a questionnaire, and it is separated because the communication is provided only by correspondence with the interview technique (Karasar, 2005).

### **2.2. Participants**

In this study, thirteen teachers from various branches working in Kastamonu were included. These branches involved primary teacher, religious culture and moral knowledge teacher, social science teacher, Arabic language teacher, English language teacher, visual art teacher, psychological counseling and guidance teacher and special education teacher. Four of them are male and nine of them are female. Three of the teachers are religious culture and moral knowledge teachers, two of the teachers are primary school teachers, two of the teachers are psychological counseling and guidance teachers, two of the teachers are English language teachers and one of teacher is Arabic language teacher and one of teacher is social sciences

teacher and one of teacher is a visual art teacher and of teacher is a special education teacher.. Participants of the research were coded T1, T2, T3, T4,.....and T13. Features of participants such as gender, professional seniority and education status regarding inclusive education are given in Table 1. below.

**Table 1.** Demographic information

Participant's Name	Gender	Professional Seniority	Branches	Education Status Regarding Inclusive Education
T1	Female	15	Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge	No
T2	Male	17	Social Sciences	Yes
T3	Male	21	Primary School	Yes
T4	Female	21	Primary School	Yes
T5	Female	20	Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge	No
T6	Female	1	Arabic Language	No
T7	Male	18	English Language	No
T8	Female	9	Psychological Counselling and Guidance	Yes
T9	Female	7	Visual Art	No
T10	Female	4	Psychological Counselling and Guidance	Yes
T11	Male	20	English Language	No
T12	Female	17	Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge	Yes
T13	Female	7	Special Education	Yes

### 2.3. Data Collection

In collecting data, the semi-structured questionnaire form of the correspondence technique, which is one of the qualitative data collection techniques, was used. Semi-structured Teacher Questionnaire Form, which was developed by examining the literature by the researcher, was used as data collection tool. The questionnaire consists of two parts, including the Personal Information Form and questions related to the purpose of the research. While the first part of the written questionnaire contains the demographic information (branches, gender, professional seniority and education status regarding inclusive education of the participants, the second part contains five questions for inclusive education. In the second part of the questionnaire, answers to the following questions were sought with five questions created by the researcher:

1. What does inclusive education mean to you?
2. What kind of practices do you think should teachers who adopt inclusive education do for disadvantaged children?
3. What kind of applications do you do when you have a disadvantaged student in your class?
4. What kind of studies do you think should be done in a school that adopts inclusive education as a school policy?
5. What kind of studies should be done across the country to include inclusive education in our education system?

### 2.4. Data Analysis

Before starting the correspondence technique, each participant was informed about the study objective, the voluntary basis of participation and that the data to be acquired from them would only be used for scientific purposes. After deciphering the data, the analysis process was started by using descriptive and content analysis strategy. Similar and common concepts that occurred many times among the written documents that were read by the researcher were written on the code list and interesting pattern terms were recorded

on a separate document. Descriptive analysis of the qualitative research was carried out in accordance with the philosophy of the qualitative research by using the remarkable expressions of the participants. Categories and themes were created by associating the concepts in the expressions of the participants with each other.

**2.5. Validity and Reliability**

In order to ensure the validity of the research, the statements of the participants were included directly. In the other hand in order to ensure the reliability of the research, the reliability formula of Miles and Huberman was used. According to the inter coder reliability formula of Miles and Huberman, two different researchers who are experts in their fields analyze and analyze the data. As a result of these codings, the categories agreed and disagree among the experts are determined and the agreement percentage between the opinions of the two experts can be determined by the inter coder reliability formula (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Subsequently, the researcher and a qualitative research specialist were studied. Qualitative research specialist was asked to encode all data, and the percentage of agreement between coders was calculated. The agreement percentage obtained is 0.93. It can be said that the percentage is acceptable and the study is reliable.

**3. Findings**

In this chapter, the data collected in this study aiming to reveal teachers' views on inclusive education were analyzed and interpreted. Consequently, categories created from concepts and five dimensions related to the categories are presented with the opinions of the participants. The responses of the participants to the teacher correspondence questionnaire were evaluated in the context of the content and the findings of the study were collected in five dimensions (inclusive education approach, what teachers should do, teacher practices, school policies to be applied and policies to be applied across the country). In this section, each dimension via content analysis are given presented as separate tables.

**3.1. Inclusive Education Approach**

The opinions of the participants regarding the inclusive education approach are divided into 2 different categories as "rights" and "education". Table 2 shows the data obtained.

**Table 2.** Teachers' views on inclusive education approach

Categories	Inclusive Education Approach	Teacher's Code
Rights	Reducing discrimination	1
	Carrying out education to cover all children by considering differences	10
Education	Including people with disabilities in general education	5
	An educational approach that includes integration	1
	Education understanding of teacher-family-student	1

When Table 2 is examined, 10 participants emphasized, in the education category, inclusive education as an education covering the all children. One of the participants stated,

*"All children have the right to receive the same education with their peers, regardless of their disability, disadvantage and refugee social status..."* (T4) which explained that inclusive education.

Another participant stated,

*"Democracy and tolerance should form classes that do not allow gender, race, nationality, culture and religion..."* (T2) which is an example to one of the inclusive education approach.

Then, 5 participants stated that inclusive education is the participation of the disabled in general education. While expressing as one of the participants for this subcategory,

*"...to include students with disabilities in general education..."* (T1) another *"It is a form of education applied for students with advanced disabilities or special education needs..."* (T6) has expressed.

### 3.2. What Teachers Should Do

The opinions of the participants regarding to what teacher should do are divided into three different categories as “teaching”, “emotion” and “awareness”. Table 3 shows the data obtained.

**Table 3.** Teachers’ views on what teachers should do

Categories	What Teachers Should Do	f
Teaching	Teaching suitable for individual differences	7
	To be able to prepare materials	2
	Giving an equal opportunity to the students	2
	To prepare BEP	1
	Finding solution to problems	1
	Creating a democratic classroom environment	1
	Uncovering students' strengths	1
	Multi-sensory teaching	1
	Using peer teaching	1
Emotion	Developing a sense of empathy	3
	Love of profession	1
Awareness	Respect for cultural and individual differences	2
	Providing peer awareness	2
	Getting educated	2
	Cooperation with parents	1
	Getting help from expert	1
	Directing students to receive psychological support	1
	To make the student sit in the front row	1

When Table 3 is analysed, 7 participants in the teacher categories stated that they are for teachers to provide training according to individual differences. Afterwards, 2 participants emphasized that they should prepare appropriate materials and give all students an equal chance of education. The teachers' statements are as follows:

*“Special programs and additional events and plans should be organized for them.” (T10)*

*“Different studies should be done according to the learning style of disadvantaged students.” (T11)*

*“A teacher must give education to students by giving them equal opportunities by approaching them according to their individual differences.” (T4)*

A teacher used the following statement, emphasizing the revealing of the students' strengths:

*“It is necessary to direct and assign duties to sports, music and artistic activities and to reveal their skills in these fields.” (T11)*

In the Emotion category, 3 participants stated that teachers should improve their empathy skills. One of the participants stated that,

*“Teachers who adopt inclusive education should first empathize. They should teach the children they teach as if they were teaching their own children.”(T4)*

*“Firstly, a sense of empathy should be developed in these teachers. The teacher, who develops this feeling, can prepare an environment suitable for his education even in all kinds of difficulties.” (T3)*

In the awareness category, 2 teachers each stated that peers' awareness should be increased, cultural and individual differences should be respected and education should be taken. Teachers' statements on this matter are listed as follows:

*“In order for a teacher to train herself in inclusive education practices, she must first receive problem solving and communication skills training.” (T8)*

*“First of all, separation in the classroom and the otherization of the student should not be allowed. Students should be asked to respect differences.” (T12)*

### 3.3. Teachers’ Practice

The opinions of the participants regarding to what teacher practice are divided into two different categories as “for disadvantaged students” and “for all students”. Table 4 shows the data obtained.

**Table 4.** Teachers’ Views on Their Practices

Categories	Teachers’ Practice	f
For disadvantaged students	Appropriate training to individual characteristics	5
	Ensuring the active participation of the disadvantaged student in the learning environment	3
	To be able to prepare materials	3
	To prepare BEP	3
	One to one care	2
	To let the student progress at her own pace	2
	Provide self-acceptance and self-esteem training for disadvantaged individuals	2
	Making lots of practices	1
	To make the student sit in the front row	1
	To give worksheets with large font	1
	Not to feel different	1
	Training time programming	1
	Using peer teaching	1
	Multi-sensory teaching	1
For all students	To teach empathy and respect for individual differences	2
	To create a positive mainstreaming environment	2
	Physical environment regulations	1
	Making awareness studies	1
	Detect the difference	1
	Getting expert help	1

As seen in Table 4, according to participants’ opinion regarding for their practices, 5 teachers in the for disadvantages students categories stated that they appropriate training to individuals characteristic. Teachers' statements on this matter are listed as follows:

*“I organize special programs and additional activities plans that are suitable for individual features.” (T9)*

*“I prepare a lesson plan suitable for them level. I make a subject that is covered during the lesson process in the simplest way and let them join the lesson.” (T6)*

*“Unfortunately, our classrooms do not leave us time to spare time for our disadvantaged students. However, whenever I have the opportunity, I prepare documents suitable for their individual differences and have conversations.”(T5)*

She was only one participant who said she was teaching peer and gave the following statement:

*“I apply peer teaching method. I match academically good students with students who have problems with lessons.” (T13)*

In addition, two participants (T10 and T8) stated provide self-acceptance and self-esteem training for disadvantaged individuals. The statements of the participants are as follows:

*“In addition to ensuring the active participation of the disadvantaged students, I do self-acceptance studies.” (T10)*

*"I do awareness activities for all my students at my school. For my disadvantaged students, I do self-acceptance, empathy, respect and self-esteem studies."* (T8)

As seen in Table 4, according to participants' opinion regarding for their practices, 2 teachers in the for all students categories stated that they teach empathy and respect for individual differences and they create a positive mainstreaming environment. The statement of one of the participants on this subject is as follows:

*"I ensure the active participation of the student in the lesson. I support them with studies on empathy, respect for individual differences and self-acceptance."* (T3)

### 3.4. School Policies to be Implemented

The opinions of the participants regarding to what school policies to be implemented are divided into two different categories as "approach" and "educational". Table 5 shows the data obtained.

**Table 5.** Teachers' Views on School Policies to Be Implemented

Categories	School policies to be implemented	f
Approach	Physical environment regulations	7
	Justice and egalitarian management approach	2
	Providing material support	1
	Identification of students with disabilities identified carefully	1
Educational	Parent awareness studies	3
	Organizing awareness-raising seminars for peers	2
	Art-social-sports activities	2
	In-service training for teachers	1
	Organizing social activities that will feel safe and valuable for each individual	1
	Opening active school clubs	1
	Determining students' strengths and directing them	1
Providing education suitable for students' levels	1	

As seen in Table 5 in approach category, 7 participants determined the physical environment regulations. Participants' statements on this matter are listed as follows:

*"Environmental regulations such as ramp, elevator and field must be made for disabled people."* (T10)

*"The boards in the school should be prepared in different languages for foreign students. In other words, boards prepared in Turkish can be translated into different languages for disadvantaged refugee students."* (T13)

*"Practices that facilitate the work of disadvantaged students should be carried out as much as possible. Stairs, their location in the classroom and environments where they can easily reach canteens or toilets where they will not be damaged during breaks should be provided."* (T1)

*"Adequate resource rooms should be opened and existing resource education rooms should be reorganized."* (T5)

Moreover, in the educational category, 3 participants stated that schools should follow a parent awareness policy. The statement of one of the participants on this subject is as follows:

*"Cooperation with parents is very important for me. For this reason, I try to organize an education by including parents in education activities."* (T3)

### 3.5. Policies to be Applied Across the Country

The opinions of the participants regarding to policies to be applied across the country are divided into three different categories as "education and awareness", "economic support" and "other studies". Table 6 shows the data obtained.

**Table 6.** Teachers' Views on the Policies to Be Applied Across the Country

Categories	Policies to be applied across the country	f
Education And Awareness	In-service training for teachers	4
	Awareness of the society about the disabled people	3
	Providing education suitable for students' levels	2
	Organizing awareness-raising seminars for teachers	2
	Respect for differences student education	1
	Educational support for school administrators to increase opportunities for disabled people	1
	Expanding the application fields	1
	Affective teacher training	1
Economic support	Physical environment regulations	6
	Providing economic support to schools	1
	Providing economic support to teachers	1
	The need to appoint a guidance teacher	1
Other studies	Development and supervision of curriculum by considering individual differences	3
	Identification of students with disabilities	1
	A joint study is required nationwide	1
	The creation of learning environment outside the classroom	1

As seen in Table 6 in education and awareness category 4 participant regarding on policies on across the country want to in-service training for teachers about inclusive education. Participants' statements on this matter are listed as follows:

*"Teachers across the country should be given not only field education but also an affective education."* (T3)

*"Firstly, teachers should be provided with an adequate and effective training in this field."* (T5)

*"With school administrations, teachers should be trained on how these students can be educated more easily and without hurting, how opportunities can be increased and what they can do."* (T1)

Besides this, 6 participants stated that economical supports should be made regarding inclusive education activities to be carried out across the country. There are also 3 participants highlighting development and supervision of curriculum by considering individual differences. Some participants' statements on this matter are listed as follows:

*"Education programs should be developed taking into account the individual characteristics of the students and the education of the students. And these programs should be supervised."* (T4)

*"Firstly, the curriculum prepared should be more flexible and should be prepared by considering the individual differences of the students."* (T12)

*"Teachers can be supported by providing material and financial support across the country on inclusive education."* (T2)

In addition, a participant in the other studies category states:

*"In order to cover all students, which is the most important aspect of this field, a joint study should be designed across the country in the field of inclusive education and it should be ensured that the inclusive education approach is placed at all levels of education."* (T10)

#### 4. Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, which aims to explain what teachers' views and practices about inclusive education, teachers were asked to answer the teacher controversy questionnaire consisting of five questions. When the findings were examined, it was seen that the participants mostly understood the individuals with special needs in

inclusive education. In this context, it is hoped that the research results will help in understanding inclusive education correctly in our country. In this context, inclusive education approach, what teachers should do, teachers' practice, school policies to be implemented and policies to be applied the country categories have emerged. In the inclusive education approach category, teachers were mostly informed about inclusive education but it was observed that they included "students with special needs" and answered the written questionnaire. However, 8 out of 13 participants stated that inclusive education is Carrying out education to cover all children by considering differences. The majority of the participants stated that teachers who adopt an inclusive education approach should teach according to individual differences. Then, the participants emphasize that teachers should improve their empathy skills. As a supportive view to this finding, Şeker and Aslan (2015) suggests that teachers gain a multicultural perspective, train without any prejudice, and realize their education by being aware of the child's emotions. In the context of inclusive education, they stated that the participants planned the most appropriate education for individual differences, prepared appropriate materials, prepared and implemented an individualized education program and enabled their students to participate effectively in the educational environment. There are studies supporting this finding in the literature (Gürdoğan Bayır, 2019; Ayan Ceyhan, 2016). By differentiating teaching according to individual differences, a meaningful education is provided by prioritizing students' readiness levels, interests, and learning styles and targeted gains are foreseen (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2010). The fact that the participants stated that the most needed to be done in the schools are the environmental arrangements, and that the inclusive education is associated with the education of the disabled. They also reported that, as inclusive education practices across the country, the participants should mostly develop physical and technical opportunities in schools and provide in-service training to teachers. There are studies supporting these findings in the literature (Ayan Ceyhan, 2016; Önder & Güçlü, 2014; Özan, Şener, Polat, & Yaraş, 2015). It is stated in the literature that it is the responsibility of the school management to make physical arrangements within the school (Avcı & Bal, 1999). In addition, the task and responsibilities of school administrators include creating a special education team, trying to ensure the planning and continuity of the process, conducting follow-up studies, providing access to academic information and special education specialists that teachers need, involving special education personnel outside the school, backing up the student records. (Yılmaz, Uysal & Koç, 2019). Parent awareness studies stated by three participants are seen as an important pillar of inclusive education. In this context, it should be considered that the participants' discussion of parent awareness studies is an important finding. In the inclusive education approach given by taking the student to the center, the parents who the student shares out of school should also be included in the inclusive education. (Ayan Ceyhan, 2016; Pekdoğan & Bozgün, 2018; Önder & Güçlü, 2014). Peer education is stated as a very effective method in inclusive education. (Oral, 2016). In this context, only one of the participants applied this method shows that teachers are very inadequate in this regard. On the other hand, it is one of the important findings of the research that there is only one participant who stated that he revealed the strength of his student. In line with the results of the research, it is recommended to organize in-service trainings supported by methods, techniques and strategies that include educational activities involving disadvantaged students, as well as inclusive training for teachers. In addition, it is recommended to carry out awareness studies covering teachers, students and families within the scope of an inclusive education project throughout the country. seminars, billboards, family awareness campaigns to be held in the first weeks of educational activities are among these suggestions.

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