

TEACHER TRAINING ON SPECIAL EDUCATION IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

The important issue of special education services is the special education teacher who have been trained on instruction strategies for children with special needs. Special education teachers have been trained in short term in-service education programs and certificate programs in Turkey until 1983, after 1983 special education teachers are being trained by the universities in the undergraduate programs. There are ten undergraduate programs on special education in the universities for different special education categories in Turkey. The programs consist of 143-144 credit hours of courses offered in eight semesters. A minor program is also included in these programs. However, universities have master and doctorate programs on special education for professionals who have graduated teacher training program on special education and related with special education support programs.

Key words: special education, teacher training, higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Regular education of Turkey included pre-school, primary school, secondary school, further education colleges, and higher education. Special education is an important part of Turkish education system. Ministry of Education is responsible for the organization both of regular education and special education in Turkey. The individuals in need of special education are protected by the Special Education Law 573. This law arranges the services of Special Education. According to the Special Education Law services in Turkey are planned and applied through out the country by Special Education Guiding and Consulting Services Head Office under Ministry of Education. Special Education Services are provided by the teachers who are educated and trained at various educational institutions. However, within those teachers, the ones who are educated in the field of Special Education are certainly the most important ones for improving the special education services effectively.

The definitions of some important terms on special education are as follows: Special education is the education which aims to meet the educational needs of individuals who are in need of special education in an environment appropriate for the deficiencies and characteristics of those individuals using the specially developed educational programs and techniques provided by specially trained staff. Individual in need of special education: The individual who is at a significantly different level compared to his/her peers in terms of the individual characteristics and educational adequacy. According to the decree law no. 573 on special education, the basic principles of special education are as follows in line with the overall objectives regulating of Turkish National Education (KHK, 1997).

- a) All the individuals who are in need of special education will benefit from the special education services in line with their interests, wishes, adequacies and abilities.
- b) Education of the individuals who are in need of special education will start at an early age.
- c) The special education services will be planned and provided without separating the individuals who are in need of special education from their social and physical environments as much as possible.
- d) It will be a priority to educate those individuals who are in need of special education together with other individuals by taking those individuals' educational performances into consideration and by making adaptations in the aim, content and teaching processes.
- e) Cooperation will be established with the institutions and organizations that provide all types of rehabilitation for the education of individuals who are in need of special education to continue their education at all levels and with all types uninterruptedly.
- f) Individualized education plans will be developed for the individuals who are in need of special education and the educational programs will be implemented as individualized.
- g) Opinions of the organizations working for the individuals who are in need of special education will be asked for the development of special education policies.
- h) The special education services will be planned so as to cover the social interaction and mutual adaptation process of the individuals who are in need of special education.

There are three services and opportunities in special education in Turkey: (1) special education is a formal education in special schools, (2) children with special education needs are educated in mainstream schools and special classrooms, (3) there are support services as physical therapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy in rehabilitation centers, etc. The services are related with education ministry, general directorate of special education and guidance, city organizations, special education and guidance centers. Special education alternatives in Turkey; Guidance and Research Centers, Special Classes in Regular Schools, Schools for Trainable Children, Primary Schools for Educable Children, Vocational Education Centers, Occupation Education Center, Residential Institutions, Private-special Schools, Private-Special Rehabilitation Centers, and University Affiliated Centers.

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS IN TURKEY

In Turkey as it is throughout the world, the training of special education teachers can be at the undergraduate, graduate or doctorate levels. The teacher training of special education teachers started in 1952 at Gazi Institute of Education as a two year undergraduate program. In later years the needs of special education training has been met by short term certificate programs (Ataman, 2004). In addition to these certificate programs, the teachers from three year programs were taken into a one term graduate program; however, this program failed due to the fact that candidates did not complete the program. In the lights of these programs in the education of the handicapped, it became apparent that these certificate programs were only temporary solutions; and training qualified teachers for special education could only be solved through permanent programs (Konrot, 1991). As the need of demanded qualified teachers in the field, Anadolu University started its graduate program in special education in 1983. Initially, established as special education teacher training program at the department of educational sciences, psychological services in education. The program in later years became an independent program. Although, different universities had different special education curriculums, the reorganization of the higher education systems at the time through improvement and unification to the special education curriculum. But now, teacher training on special education apply by education faculties, department of special education of universities.

Special Education Department is a four-year teacher education program which aims to train special education teachers for the education of the students with special needs. Special Education Teacher Training Programs actively train teachers for different kinds of handicapped. Special Education Programs include Departments of Mentally Handicapped, Hearing Impaired, and Visually Impaired. Recently, the Teacher Training Program for Gifted Individuals is established.

The programs consist of 143-144 credit hours of courses offered in eight semesters. A minor program is also included in these programs. The Mentally-Handicapped Education Program undergraduate students, additionally, choose both Vocational Education or integration minor programs and starting from their third semester.

In both programs, the students need to take nine credit hours. On the other hand, Hearing-Impaired Education students need to choose science teaching, mathematics teaching, social science teaching, or Turkish language teaching as a minor and take courses related to that minor program starting from the second semester. However, Visually Impaired Teacher Training Program does not have minor program facilities (YOK, 1997).

As in all teacher training programs, contents of the courses and course descriptions are described, and sufficient amount of teacher training courses are provided in special education programs. In addition to these, the programs have general courses to help effective use of Turkish Language. Set aside from the rest of the Regular Education Programs, Special Education Programs do not include school experience courses. Nevertheless, teaching practice courses are provided extensively and the teaching practices, which are held in one semester in other programs, are given in two semesters.

The field courses in special education programs consist of special education, changing attitudes towards the handicapped, introduction to the education of mentally-handicapped children, education of the mentally handicapped, developing individualized education programs and evaluation, educational and behavioral assessment, integration and special education support services, behavior management, early childhood education for mentally handicapped children, training and guiding parents of the mentally handicapped children counseling and, training courses for various disciplines, and teaching practice courses. On Table 1, the program of teacher training program for children with mental retardation can be seen.

Table 1. Program in Education of the Mentally Disabled

1. Semester	2. Semester
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Fundamentals of Information Technology * Introduction to Teacher Training * Health Science and First Aid * Ataturk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution I * Turkish I: Writing Skills * Special Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Music * Educational Research and Report Writing * Ataturk's Principles and History of Turkish Revolution II * Turkish II: Speaking Skills * Introduction: Mentally Handicapped Children * Changing Attitudes Towards the Handicapped * Individual Differences and Psychological Approaches * Foreign Language Courses
3. semester	4. Semester
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Human Development and Learning * Developing Individualized Education Programs and Evaluation * Education of the Mentally Handicapped * Language Development and Communication * Educational and Behavioral Assessment * Integration and Special Education Support Services * Elective Courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Teaching Music to Mentally Handicapped * Early Childhood Education for the Mentally Handicapped * Teaching Communication Skills to the Mentally Handicapped * Teaching Concepts and Skills to the Mentally Handicapped * Behavior Management * Elective Courses
5. semester	6. semester
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Use of Technology and Materials Development * Teaching Reading and Writing to the Mentally Handicapped * Teaching Science to the Mentally Handicapped * Teaching Mathematics to the Mentally Handicapped * Preparing Integration Programs * Elective Courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Classroom Management * Teaching Turkish to the Mentally Handicapped * Teaching Social Sciences and Social Studies to the Mentally Handicapped * Teaching Games and Physical Education to the Mentally Handicapped * Teaching Art to the Mentally Handicapped * Teaching Self-Care Skills to the Mentally Handicapped
7. semester	8. semester
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Teaching Experience I (Field Base Experiences) * Preparing and Implementing Assessment Tools for Students with MR. * Developing Measurement Materials to Determine the Performance Level * Training and Guiding Parents of the Mentally Handicapped Children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Practicum Teaching Experience II (Field Base Experiences) * Developing Lesson Plans for the Trainable Mentally Handicapped * Developing Instructional Materials for the Mentally Handicap * School Programming and Education Settings for the Mentally Handicapped Children * Placing and Monitoring Trainable Mentally Handicapped Children

Teacher training programs on special education have intensively applied courses and practicum. Practicum courses, in the seventh semester includes Teaching Experience I (Field Base Experiences), Preparing and Implementing Assessment Tools for Students and Developing Measurement Materials to Determine the Performance Level, and in eighth semester the courses include Practicum Teaching Experience II (Field Base Experiences), Developing Lesson Plans for the Trainable Mentally Handicapped and Developing Instructional Materials for the Mentally Handicapped.

These three courses are planned in order to combine each other in the two semesters by the practicum professors. The practicum performances of the senior students are being observed and evaluated by the practicum professors, classroom teachers and the practicum coordinators in the schools. Depending on the course program, the practicum students are being placed into the appropriate classes in the practicum schools in the first week of their practicum by the professors. The classroom teachers guide the practicum students while they prepare the

program, and do the responsibilities determined by the professors and they also facilitates the environment in the classroom and school. In the teacher training program for education of children with mental retardation, the practicum students participate in different settings in the seventh and eighth semesters in order to work with different levels of retardation. When the students successfully complete the courses as well as the practicum courses they get the degree of teacher of children with mental retardation, hearing impairment and visual impairment according to their programs in the special education programs.

The teacher candidates can work in governmental special education schools as well as the private special education and rehabilitation centers as special education teachers. Teachers who graduate from the teacher training programs can also attend to graduate programs. In the educational science institutes in related universities there are graduate programs for both masters and doctoral degrees. There are 10 universities providing undergraduate programs in special education. Besides, Anadolu, Gazi and Ankara universities provide masters and doctoral degree, and Abant İzzet Baysal and Istanbul universities provide only masters degree programs.

EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY AT THE SERVICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Besides above graduate programs, there is an online graduate program especially for people who do not have special education teacher certificate which is called “Training Program for the Teachers of the Children with Developmental Deficiency” in Anadolu University. This program accepts graduates of teacher training programs, child development and education programs, psychology programs, social services programs, and guidance and psychological counseling programs. The graduate program consists three semesters for people who are graduated from special education departments and teacher training programs for children with mental retardation. People who are not graduated from the programs mentioned, have to take one semester preparation courses. The courses in this program can be seen on the Table 2 (Anadolu University, 2006).

Table 2. Training Program for the Teachers of the Children with Developmental Deficiency

Preparation	1. Semester
Special Education Area Developing and Evaluation of Individualized Education Program Practicum	Developmentally Disabilities Area Instruction Methods Applied Behavior Analysis Early Childhood Education and Parent Training
2. Semester	3. Semester
Teaching Functional Academic Skills Teaching Non-Academic Skill Educating Children With Autism Errorless Training Methods	Research Methods in Social Sciences Integration and Support Services Project

Special education teachers who have their four years graduate degrees are being accepted to Training Program for the Teachers of the Children with Developmental Deficiency Masters Program. Graduate students who had their degrees from programs other than teacher training program for mental retardation has to attend a one semester preparation courses. The preparation students attend to two courses on the internet (online) and one semester practicum course in the research institute for the handicapped during summer. The students who complete the preparation courses, attend the courses for the following three semesters on the internet. The online courses give by WebCT software. The course contents develop by Macromedia Breeze software.

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