



THE PROBLEMS SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS ENCOUNTER AND THEIR SOLUTION RECOMMENDATIONS (THE CASE OF NORTHERN CYPRUS)

Vasfiye KARABIYIK

Dr., Cyprus International University, Faculty of Education, North Cyprus

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2248-2840>

vkarabiyik@ciu.edu.tr

Hasan AVCIOĞLU

Prof.Dr., Cyprus International University, Faculty of Education, North Cyprus

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3464-2285>

hasana@ciu.edu.tr

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Abstract

Providing efficient education services at special education centers requires teachers to work productively. Increasing teachers' productivity depends on specifying the problems they face at practice centers. The most significant advantage of specifying teachers' opinions is forming the basis for making regulations in order to present effective services for individuals with special needs. This study both aims at identifying the problems special education teachers face at the education centers and also finding their solutions accordingly. For this reason, 20 special education teachers who work at 5 private practice centers within The Ministry of Education, were interviewed during 2014-2015 educational year. This study is a qualitative research in case study model. The data is gathered with qualitative data collection techniques, interview forms consisting of semi-structured questions and it is analyzed with the content analysis method. At the research findings it is obvious that special education teachers have encountered several problems regarding; (a) their students' learning in class and behavioral characteristics, (b) other staff at school, (c) physical characteristics of the school and the classroom, (d) programme and (e) material development. These findings enabled the improvement of the recommendations for increasing the quality of the education given to individuals with special needs.

Keywords: Special education, individuals with special needs, individualized education plan.

INTRODUCTION

Special education, provided for students characteristically differentiating from students who benefit from general education services; is the complement of educational services which are organized according to individual needs, aiming to maximize the possibility of the individual's independent survival (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003; Kircaali-İftar, 1998). According to Eripek (2007); the necessity of finding an answer to the questions of to whom special education will be given, from which special education service he/she will make use of and where this service will be provided, must be emphasized (Cavkaytar, 2014).

According to Eripek (1998), the individuals who need special education are noticed during pre-school period, because these individuals display different behaviours compared to their peers. According to Zarkowska and Clements (1995), these inappropriate behaviours harm both themselves and their environment, prevent them from learning new skills, and thus cause them to stay out of their learning environment (cited by Sucuoğlu, 2003).

Low intelligence level, the age and gender of the individual, and the level of disability increase the frequency of inappropriate behaviors in these individuals (Aman, Burrow, & Wolford, 1995; Bihm, Pointdexter, Kienlan, & Smith, 1992; Coe et al., 1999; Polloway, Epstein, & Cullinan, 1986; cited by



Sucuoğlu, 2003). In this respect, the disability of the individual directly or indirectly affects the characteristics of behaviour and learning negatively. At the same time, inappropriate family conditions, negative attitudes and behaviours of the environment and unqualified education causes the emergence of the problems in learning and behaviour. For this reason, in order to solve learning and behavioral problems beginning from pre-school period, it is quite significant to control inappropriate behaviour with appropriate educational services (Eripek, 2003).

In the aim of spreading special education services and applying them efficiently, the necessity of qualified and support staff has been increasing (Akçamete, 1998). The result of the increasing and differentiating needs requires staff with different qualities to take charge in (Friend, 2006). The teacher's character and personality, being highly educated, and his or her responsibility for his or her work affect the quality of the education the individuals with special needs are taking (Billingsley, 2004). At the same time, due to the increase in the number of special education classes, the lack of qualified staff in special education has become a great problem (Brownell, Sindelar, Bishop, Langley, & Seo, 2002). For providing sufficient special education for students with special needs, it is quite efficient that administrator's support their teachers and the duties of the staff are determined (Brownell et al., 2002). Most of the special education services require more than one expert to work together. For this reason, the lack of expert teachers in this field, the qualities of the teachers and the communication among teachers play an important role in improving the quality of special education services (Özsoy, 1998).

In order to provide appropriate education for individuals with special needs, it is necessary to organize a proper setting according to the type, level and the needs of the inability. Settings with bad acoustic insulation, noisy and dark places, affect the education environment negatively (Akçamete, 1998; Batshaw, 2002). Due to that reason, the characteristics of the individuals with special needs must be taken into account while organizing the environment (Özsoy, 1998). At the same time, a qualified building in which teachers work efficiently, and in which things are properly organized for special education, plays an important role in the quality of educational services (Brownell et al., 2002).

The individual with special needs, after being placed in an official school or institution according to the special education commission's evaluation report, must be observed beginning from preschool period at each stage in education and an appropriate educational programme for the student must be determined (MEB, 2006). The students, after being placed in any educational environment, follow the school's educational programme and this programme is applied to these students. The students, who cannot display the prerequisite skills the programme they follow requires, face difficulties in accomplishing the goals of the lessons. In order to organize an efficient educational programme for the students with special needs, the expected behaviours which students can display and behaviours which they are in need of, must be determined. Efficient education requires the improvement of educational programmes according to the method students can do and learn from (Avcıoğlu, 2015).

Providing special education facilities for the individuals with special needs and whether these facilities are appropriate or inappropriate for the needs of the child is crucial. Providing efficient educational services at special education centers require; educational settings designed according to the individual's inability type, level and need, educational programmes determined with proper aims, experimental learning materials that enables gaining skills and information, generalising the information and skills teachers gain with other resources and using them functionally. In order to provide this, special education service applications must be included. However, in what way the individual is provided with special education facilities and whether they are appropriate for the child's needs are seen as issues.

The people who provide special education for these individuals are teachers. In this respect, for identifying the problems special education teachers encounter and for specifying recommendations for the solution of these problems, researches are carried out inland and abroad, but no research is found in TRNC. Different problems related to each level of special education facilities are identified



in each one of these studies; in this study, it is aimed at identifying the problems related to the entire topic of material supply, organizing programmes, physical condition, school staff and students' behavioral and learning characteristics, and increasing the quality of special education services. In order to increase the efficiency of the teachers and thus provide a more extensive and effective educational service, the teachers' opinions related to the problems they face because of these matters, must be identified.

The most important benefit of identifying the teachers' opinions of the special education teachers who work at special education centers, is enabling teachers to work efficiently during their professional life and forming a basis for making necessary regulations in order to present special education efficiently to those in need.

For this reason, in this study, the problems special education teachers encounter and recommendations for their solution are aimed to be identified. In order to do that, answers to the questions below are searched for. Special education teachers': (1) What are the problems related to student behaviour in class and learning characteristics and solution offers? (2) What are the problems they face related to school staff and their solution recommendations? (3) What are the problems related to the physical conditions and their solution offers? (4) What are the problems they face related to educational programmes and their solution offers? And (5) What are the problems related to the materials and their solution offers?

METHOD

Research Model

This study which aimed at both identifying the problems special education teachers encounter and also determining their solution recommendations, is a qualitative research in case study model.

Participants

The population consists of special education teachers at 5 private special education centers within the Ministry of Education of TRNC, in 2014-2015 educational year. In the research, among the 28 special education classroom teachers who work at the 5 private special education centers within the Ministry of Education of TRNC, 20 teachers have formed the population voluntarily.

Table 1. Participant features

	Features	Number	%
Gender	Female	13	
	Male	7	
	Total	20	100
Age	20-30	5	
	30-40	7	
	40-50	8	
	Total	20	100
Undergraduate program graduated	Mentally Handicapped Teaching	4	
	Hearing Impaired Teaching	5	
	Visually Impaired Teaching	1	
	Special Education	1	
	Classroom teaching	6	
	Education Program and Management	3	
	Total	20	100

In the research, 13 of the teachers who are interviewed are women, 7 of them are men and 5 of them are between the ages of 20-30, 7 of them are between the ages of 31-40, and 8 of them are between the ages of 41-50. Moreover, it is indicated that 4 of these teachers are graduates of Mentally Handicapped Teaching Department, 5 of them are graduates of Hearing Impaired Teaching Department, 1 of them is a graduate of Visually Handicapped Teaching Department, 1 of them is a



graduate of Special Education, 6 of them are graduates of Classroom Teaching and 3 of them are graduates of Educational Programmes and Administration Department.

Collecting the Data

In this study, the data is gathered with the qualitative data collection method and interview forms of semi-structured questions. The interview questions are prepared according to the problems 3 teachers who work at a special education center in Nicosia, TRNC, have expressed during pre-interviews. Afterwards 3 experts' opinions; who all work at the university's special education field, are asked. According to the feedback collected from the experts necessary regulations are made on interview forms. As a result of these changes, the interview form consisting of 47 questions, is created.

The aim of the study is explained to the administrators of the practice centers during pre-interviews. The classroom teachers who work in 5 practice centers are seen separately, voluntary participants are specified and appropriate date and time are organized for interviewing each teacher.

The teachers who attended the research voluntarily are encoded from A to Z. The interviews between the dates of 05.12.2014-22.01.2015 are arranged according to the order of the codes. Teacher interviews are carried out between the dates of 05/12/2014 and 26/12/2014 and they took around 13 to 31 minutes.

The interviews are carried out in each teacher's own classroom. The researcher has given code names to the participants. Before the interview, the interview forms have been examined by the attendant and afterwards a pre-interview form including personal information has been filled out and the interview has been done according to the format being prepared. During the research, the data has been gathered through one to one meetings and it has been recorded by getting permission from the attendant.

The Analysis of the Data

After completing teacher interviews, the recordings were typed. In this research collected data was categorized and from this data themes were created. The data gathered from the interview forms was classified into 5 themes according to the interview questions. These themes are classified as this: 1. Problems that teachers face related to the students' actions and learning and the solution recommendations, 2. The problems related to school staff and their solution offers, 3. Physical problems of the environment and their solutions, 4. Problems related to the education programmes and their solutions and 5. Problems related to the materials and their solution recommendations.

A meaningful part such as a word, sentence or a paragraph among the data, was entitled during the coding process. In data coding process, for the parts which carry the same meaning and are interrelated, the same codes are used and different codes are not given. A chart is created and the appropriate codes, taken from specified codes, were placed in convenient words, sentences and paragraphs and then written next to the data. After completing the coding process, the data was checked. For the data, within the frame of apprehensible codes and themes, content analysis was made and an outcome was reached according to the findings.

The Validity and Reliability

This study's validity test was done according to the data gathered from the interview forms of semi-structured questions and it was carried out by checking whether the data in itself, was consistent or not connected to the environment. As a result of the observations related to the environment, reviewed data was found meaningful and was defined related to the environment. The reliability test was carried out by listening to the recordings and noting the data down. Afterwards 4 of these 20 recordings were chosen and listened randomly by an expert and notes were taken. The findings are compared and validity is checked. The notes that the researcher has taken are compared with the expert's notes and it is found out that the outcome is coherent.



FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

In this section, the sub goals created within the frame of the general aim of the study and the findings gathered from the themes related to these aims were included. At the same time, the findings were discussed between each other and by comparing within the body of literature.

The Theme and Code Headings Created within the Scope of the Research

THEME 1: Problems Experienced by Teachers Regarding Behavior and Learning Characteristics of Their Students and Solution Suggestions for These Problems

Inappropriate behavior

The effect of inappropriate behavior on teaching

Causes of inappropriate behavior

Suggestions for solving inappropriate behavior problems

Problems with controlling the classroom

Suggestions for solving problems encountered in controlling the classroom

Arrangements to the classroom environment to prevent inappropriate behavior

Problems with arrangements made in the classroom environment to prevent inappropriate behavior

Causes of problems with arrangements made in the classroom to prevent inappropriate behavior

Suggestions for solving problems with arrangements made in the classroom environment in order to prevent inappropriate behaviors

Studies on the functional use of taught skills and concepts in daily life

Problems encountered with the studies regarding the functional use of the taught skills and concepts in daily life

The reasons for the problems experienced in the studies on the functional use of the taught skills and concepts in daily life

Suggestions regarding the solution of the problems encountered in the studies related to the functional use of the taught skills and concepts in daily life

Problems in skill and concept teaching

Causes of problems in skill and concept teaching

Suggestions for solving the problems encountered in skill and concept teaching

Problems with students' learning characteristics

The effect of students' learning characteristics on teaching

Suggestions for solving the problems experienced about students' learning characteristics

THEME 2: Problems Experienced with School Personnel and Solution Suggestions for These Problems

Collaboration with other teachers at the school

Problems with communicating with other teachers at the school



Help received from other teachers at the school

Problems arising from the characteristics of the staff in the school auxiliary service staff

Suggestions for solving problems arising from the characteristics of the staff in the school auxiliary services staff

Problems encountered in defining the roles and responsibilities of the school assistant staff

Suggestions for solving the problems encountered in defining the duties and responsibilities of the school assistant staff

THEME 3: Problems Experienced by Teachers Regarding the Physical Environment and Solution Suggestions for These Problems

Problems arising from the physical characteristics of the school

Suggestions for solving problems caused by the physical characteristics of the school

Problems caused by the physical properties of the classroom

Suggestions for solving problems arising from the physical characteristics of the classroom

THEME 4: Problems Experienced with the Education Programs and Solution Suggestions for These Problems

Problems encountered while preparing an individualized education program

Suggestions for solving the problems encountered while preparing an individualized education program

Problems encountered while preparing an individualized teaching plan

Suggestions for solving the problems encountered while preparing an individualized education plan

Problems encountered while preparing a behavioral treatment plan

Suggestions for solving the problems encountered while preparing a behavioral treatment plan

Problems encountered while collecting up-to-date information through evaluations on student performance in academic fields

Suggestions for solving problems encountered while collecting up-to-date information through evaluations on student performance in academic fields

THEME 5: Problems Experienced with the Materials and Solution Suggestions for These Problems

Problems encountered in obtaining the materials needed

Suggestions for solving the problems encountered in procuring the needed materials

Problems encountered in providing the materials students need

Suggestions for solving the problems experienced in providing the materials needed by the students

Problems with the use / storage of materials



The problems teachers face related to the students' behavior and learning patterns and solution offers related to these problems

One of the findings of the first theme of the study is that, most teachers have observed students' self-harming, slanging and screaming behaviors in class as inappropriate behaviours.

Teacher H.: *"Since our student has autism, I observe behaviour that is intrinsic to autism. What are these? When he is not interested, he starts hitting for instance"*.

The finding that is mentioned, is an important data that came out during the research. When the body of literature related to this subject is examined, Acar (2000), in his study has revealed that among the inappropriate behavior teachers face, the most common ones are self-harming, speaking out without permission, standing up, wandering around the classroom, disturbing classmates and slanging.

In various studies this finding is supported with several, similar observations such as; not contributing to the activities in class (Ayhan, 2005; Güleç-Aslan, 2013), sexual issues (Güleç-Aslan, 2013), harming oneself and others, wandering around the class, crying, whistling, spinning objects (Güleç-Aslan, Özbey, Sola-Özgüç, & Cihan, 2014), tantrum and biting (Kodal, 2006). The reason of encountering these inappropriate student behaviour in class can be placing students with different diagnosis in the same classes since there is no special education law in our country and also not being able to apply efficient behavioral change techniques for preventing inappropriate behavior as the consequence of teachers from different fields of education working as special education classroom teachers.

When the participants were questioned related to the impact of inappropriate behavior on education, two findings were discovered as negative aspects affecting education. Firstly, the teachers expressed that inappropriate student behaviour affected the lessons negatively and that the efficiency of the lesson was lost; secondly, they added that the students have lost their attention and the attention span was getting shorter.

Teacher B: *"It influences negatively. There is no focus on a specific activity for a long time. I lose a lot of time since each of them is different from one another"*.

Teacher C: *"Of course. For instance, we can spend the first 10 minutes of the lesson trying to pick him up, calm him down and having him sit on his chair. So, our lesson is interrupted and after that it needs more work to catch their attention. It influences the efficiency of the lesson"*.

In one of his work, Çetin (2004) has pointed out that teachers who are graduates of different fields have faced the negative influences of inappropriate behaviour, and this finding is supported with the opinions of teachers mentioned above.

Teachers' negative attitudes towards the impact of students' inappropriate behaviour, can stem from the fact that some of the teachers cannot apply efficient classroom management techniques and they have lack of experience and sufficient information since they are graduates of classroom teaching programmes or educational programmes and administration departments.

When teachers are questioned regarding the reasons of inappropriate student behavior, they have stated that these behavior patterns arised due to family issues and attracting attention.

Teacher S: *"I'm saying that it can be related to the parents' attention. This child is still very little, she is just 6"*.

Acar (2000), has pointed out in his study that, the reasons of inappropriate student behaviour can stem from the student himself, from the need to catch attention due to the negative influence the student receives from the negative attitudes from his environment and from the activities which are not appropriate for the level of the student. It is clear that the information from Acar's (2000) study and this study's findings confirm each other. The inappropriate behaviour of the students with special needs can depend on many factors. It can be explained to the teachers that among the reasons of the



situation of displaying inappropriate behavior can be the parents' inconsistency to help the child gain better attitudes at home and the student's inability type and level. Moreover, as a result of the observations, it is emphasized that teachers cannot apply classroom management efficiently and they do not take responsibility.

It is observed that when teachers are asked whether they have difficulty in controlling the classroom, few of them has mentioned that they do. As support to this thought, Çetin (2004) and Ergenekon (2004), in their studies, have stated that teachers have difficulty in coping with inappropriate behaviour and thus this situation causes them to lose the control of the classroom. In one of their studies, Oliver and Reschly (2010) have pointed out that teachers' skills in preventing inappropriate behaviour and maintaining classroom management are quite significant. The problems faced in classroom management can be the consequence of over-crowded classrooms and the loophole in the law since it allows the placement of students with different diagnosis in the same classes. Also, it brings to mind that teachers from different fields who work at special education centers have insufficient experience and information, thus this causes problems in classroom management. Nevertheless, most of the teachers have expressed that they didn't have difficulties in management. Although they have stated that they did not have any difficulty, they said that they observed inappropriate student behavior in class. Teachers' answers to both states have been contradictory. The teachers have mentioned that they have made arrangements in the classroom such as creating a seating arrangement according to the characteristics of student behaviour and inability type and removing extra objects in the classroom setting.

Teacher K: *"For instance, if the student disturbs others, i can put her in a separate group. I can take her to the corner. If she is looking out of the window, at least I turn him towards somewhere else or towards the wall, in the way she cannot see her friends"*.

Teacher N: *"I tried not to have too many objects in class. I removed the things which attract their attention as visual stimulus. For example there were many things on the board. We removed them. We simplified the environment"*.

In one of his studies, Çetin (2004) has stated that teachers have made arrangements in the classroom according to the activity; in the study that Kodall (2006) has carried out, it is said that teachers have made the seating arrangement according to the characteristics of the students; which are both parallel to the findings of this study.

According to one of Acar's (2000) studies, the finding that teachers' expectations are in compliance with their students' level, differentiates from the findings mentioned above. It can be said that the arrangements in the classroom are made according to students' inappropriate behaviour and inability type. When necessary arrangements are made according to the characteristics of the students, it is thought that it is much easier to cope with inappropriate behaviour.

Teacher D: *"When I say family-based, I spoke to the parents about the problem solution strategies that can be done at home. If you organize your life, we will get rid of these problems. We presented solution recommendations for the parents but they are not responding"*.

Teacher E: *"I cannot make the arrangement I want since the classroom is too small. Apart from that, I do not face any problems"*.

From the teacher expressions like this and similar others; it is clarified that teachers confront problems regarding classroom arrangement because of family-based issues, the physical setting of the environment, slow continuation of the procedure and the lack of an assistant teacher. As support to this finding, Çetin (2004) has indicated that teachers have difficulty in arranging the classroom according to the activity that will be done. The reason of teachers' problems regarding classroom arrangement can be the facts that there is no legislative regulation and the buildings that are used as special education centers, are not designed appropriately as special education institutes. In order to make regulations effectively, laws can be made urgently and buildings can be constructed



conveniently for children with special needs. These buildings must be designed according to students' characteristics with proper temperature, light and sound aspects.

In addition to this the problems teachers have related to classroom arrangement are linked to factors apart from themselves such as family and physical setting. This situation brings the question into mind that teachers attribute negativities to the facts apart from themselves.

The teachers who attended the study, indicated that they carried out activities focusing on the practical usage of the taught skills and concepts on a daily basis related to self-care and social skills. On the other hand, some of them have revealed that they have done activities based on daily life activities and skills whereas the rest have said that they worked in collaboration with parent-teacher association.

Teacher C: *“Yes. We try to do activities based self-care and daily life skills such as washing hands, using the loo, as much as possible”.*

Teacher E: *“Yes. To give a short example, if we are working on doing shopping, we support the topic with a visual material and in the same week we go to a shop and observe the kids perform the skills in practice”.*

In Kodol's (2006) study, in which it is focused on doing concept generalisation activities with the support of the family, doing activities related to the practical usage of the skills and concepts in daily life in different settings, with many repetitions and with different materials, support the findings of this study.

It is thought that making generalisation studies in collaboration with the parent-teacher association related to students' practical usage of learned skills and concepts on a daily basis will increase the permanence of learned skills and concepts.

Teachers have expressed that they have difficulties related to the activities focusing on the practical usage of learned skills and concepts on a daily basis. They have added that since the family's socio-economic level is low, their budget is insufficient, the physical facilities are inadequate, there is no parental support and that students with different levels in the same class have performed differently from each other.

Teacher E: *“We have some financial problems. It is difficult to receive financial support from the parents. The reason to this is the low socio-economic standards of the families”.*

Teacher B: *“I have difficulties while doing skill teaching activities. Because the physical facilities of the school are not convenient”.*

In the studies Berry, Petrin, Gravelle, and Farmer (2011) has made; in respect of the fact that teachers have emphasized that they needed theoretical and practical trainings on topics such as teaching drama and games, language and communication skills related to the practical use of skills; they differentiate from the findings above. The difference among the research outcome and the research findings in the body of literature may originate from the facilities of schools in countries. The cause of the problems teachers face related to the effective use of taught skills and concepts in daily life, can be the administration's not providing a separate financial resource for these activities, not having sufficient physical conditions and families' characteristics. Most of the teachers have revealed that the most important problems related to students' learning habits are forgetfulness, having short attention span and having different learning paces.

Teacher S: *“One of the problems I face is forgetfulness; meaning that long term memory does not do much so we have to repeat things”.*

Teacher D: *“Having short attention span. Due to special conditions we have to move forward but we fall behind instead”.*



Both Ergenekon's (2004) study, in which students' inability groups and performances in classes are different; and Güleç-Aslan, Özbey, Sola-Özgüç, and Cihan (2014)'s study's consequences which indicate that teachers have difficulties because of the various learning styles of the students; support the findings of this research. Forgetfulness as one of students' learning habits, having different attention spans, and different learning paces can be thought as alterable according to the inability type of the students. For that reason, it is found out that having students from different inability groups in the same class may cause problems in concept and skills teaching.

The teachers who have attended the research, have expressed that they could not finish the lectures at the arranged time, learning is not permanent and their lessons were interrupted due to students' learning characteristics which affect the process negatively.

Teacher C: *"These characteristics of the students affect our lessons. Of course, if this was not the case, a standard child would learn it in one day on the other hand we may teach this concept in a day but we have to repeat it over and over for a week or two so we can make it permanent"*

The outcome of the research of Güleç-Aslan, Özbey, Sola-Özgüç and Cihan (2004) supports this finding. It can be thought that students' capacity may influence the learning process in a negative way.

Problems teachers face related to the school staff and solution recommendations

In the second theme of the research, it is indicated by the teachers that they most work collaboratively with other teachers during social activities, teaching, teaching programme development, material development and sharing.

Teacher M: *"Yes, of course. For instance if I'm working on reading and writing, I share my opinions with another colleague related to literature search, books or notebooks or about the method we are using. If we are going to do something about physical education, music or dancing, we definitely do it together. We always do collaborative work"*.

When the body of literature is examined about this finding, in one of the studies Ergenekon (2004) has stated that teachers have done collaborative work with each other related to the topics of classroom management, lesson plan development and student evaluation; however it is also mentioned that some teachers encounter difficulties. In their studies, Billingsley (2004), Bishop, Brownell, Klingner, Leko, and Galman (2010) have revealed that a cooperation based working environment improves teacher's efficiency. On the other hand Altinkurt's (2008) study which aimed at specifying the problems of special education and rehabilitation centers, have shown that there were problems related to the quality of the teachers. It can be connected to the facts that teachers do not work collaboratively, the school administration does not encourage cooperation and most of the teachers being graduates of other fields of education.

When the teachers are questioned about whether they have communication problems with other colleagues, some of them stated that they faced problems due to disinterest to special education and daily changeable psychological state of the person.

Teacher E: *"Partially. Since we are working with people, we can have difficulty in communication with the ones who have problems in considering people's psychological states on that day. But on another day, they can be open to communication. The reason is people's psychological state which change daily"*.

Ergenekon (2004) has supported this outcome in his research and has stated that teachers have difficulty in communication with colleagues at school. This communication problem may be the result of the lack of teachers' cooperative work at school.



The problems related to the physical environment and their solutions

As the third theme of the research, the most significant problems related to the physical aspects of the school are the wideness of the schoolyard and the inappropriateness of the school's size. According to the outcomes of teacher interviews, regarding the physical aspects of the school, most teachers have said that because the school was a either a dormitory or a house before turning into a special education center, "the special education building is not assigned suitably".

Teacher D: *"Our schoolyard is big but it is not designed conveniently. Our building is big in fact but the classrooms are not settled properly. Empty spaces are dead spaces and there are a lot of them and they are not made ready for use"*.

When the body of literature regarding this outcome, is examined, Güleç-Aslan, Özbey, and Cihan's (2014) studies support the findings in the way that classrooms physical aspects are not suitable for students' characteristics and that teachers face difficulties because of placing more students than the pre-determined number of students in each class. In their studies Başaran (2001), Brownell et al. (2002) have pointed out that there are problems related to the insufficient facilities in the working environment.

The most significant reason of the problems related to the physical aspects of the special education centers, is the fact that buildings were either a dormitory or a house before, thus they were not constructed suitable for special education institutes. Suitable buildings for special education can be re-constructed. Also, the classrooms can be re-arranged since the number of students is more and the classrooms are less.

Teachers have indicated that the most significant problem related to the physical aspects of the classroom is that classrooms are not convenient in the aspects of temperature, light, sound and visuality.

Teacher D: *"We have problems with heating. The sound is not proper. We confuse our break time with the school's break time downstairs. Students lose their attention because of this. Especially, if there are problems in the other school, screaming and crisis begin so everything is messed up"*.

The outcomes of the research of Çetin (2004) in which it is stated that the classroom is not suitable for special education, and Ergenekon (2004) and Başaran's (2001) studies in which it is indicated that classrooms are not designed according to individuals with special needs in the aspects of temperature, light and sound and that teachers face problems related to these factors; have supported the findings of this research. The reason of the problems of the physical aspects of the classroom may stem from the fact that they are not constructed according to the needs of students with special needs. New arrangements can be made within the body of the Ministry of Education.

The problems of education programs and their solutions

In the fourth theme of the research, one of the most important finding is that even a little, teachers have difficulties in determining the aims while preparing IEP, determining weekly lesson durations and determining students' needs since their performances are not evaluated by the counseling and research center. Both the studies of Güleç-Aslan (2013) in which it is said that teachers have difficulty in planning lessons and Güleç-Aslan, Özbey, Sola-Özgüç, and Cihan's (2014) studies in which it is stated that there is not IEP team; support the views indicated above. In their studies, Avcıoğlu (2011), Bülbül (2010), and Vuran, Çolak and Gürgür (2003), and Kuyumcu (2011), have identified that teachers have insufficient information related to the topics of determining the criterion, measuring and evaluating whether the IEP targeted aims are accomplished. The results of one of Avcıoğlu's studies in which it is pointed out that teachers have problems in planning and applying IEP, and Çetin (2004), Ergenekon (2004), Kuyumcu (2011), Öztürk and Eratay's (2010) studies which revealed that teachers have problems in determining the aims and making plans support the findings mentioned above.



George, Gersten, and Grosenick (1995), and Mehrenberg's (2013) studies show consistency with the research findings in the way that teachers have indicated that they do know taking the performance in the IEP process, however not having an IEP team and having overcrowded classrooms cause problems and in order to solve this problem they feel the need of educational support and organizational arrangements. The improvement of the professional competency in the field of individualized educational programmes will enable a more qualitative special education (Zionts, Shellady & Zionts, 2006). Having teachers who are graduates of different fields or from the fields of teaching the hearing impaired or visually impaired be on duty and not giving enough importance to IEP planning during their trainings may cause these problems.

Teachers have revealed that they have great difficulty in “getting support from the parents” while they are gathering current information through evaluations related to the student's academic performance since parents do not spend time with their kids and since parents do not have information related to the studies.

Teacher E: *“Of course I am collecting. In fact special education is not only at school but we also have to go to the family's house. We have to go out with the kid in order to observe him/her in social environment. Since the parents are working, they do not have time for the teacher so we have problems in home visits”.*

Reaching the same outcome in Vuran, Çolak and Gürgür's (2003) studies related to the problems of the teacher-parent cooperation, support the information above. The reason of teachers' difficulty in collecting current information through evaluations related to student's academic performance can be thought to stem from not having teacher-parent cooperation.

Problems related to materials and their solutions

One of the findings of the fifth theme of the study is among the materials need during their lectures are visual materials, special education books, materials for improving hand-eye coordination, technological materials, concept materials, three dimensional materials and visual and auditory materials. The reason of the necessity of various materials stems from providing materials according to the students' characteristics.

Teacher E: *“I need visual materials in my lessons”.*

The teachers have said that the biggest problem in maintaining these materials is that their prices are high and there is no budget for that.

Teacher E: *“The materials I need are all technological since I keep up with the technology, so the prices are too high”.*

This finding is supported in the studies of Altınkurt, 2008; Avcıoğlu, 2012; Ayhan 2005, Brownell et al., 2002; Çetin, 2004; Ergenekon 2004; Güleç-Aslan, Özbey, Sola-Özgüç, and Cihan, 2014; Werts, Carpenter and Fewell, 2014; in which they have stated that teachers have problems in material development and maintaining”.

Since the Ministry of Education does not have enough budget for the materials, it can be accepted as the cause of the problem in maintaining materials. Materials can be maintained by having a separate budget for them.

In the study, the teachers have expressed that the biggest problem related to the storage and usage of the materials is not having proper places to keep the materials in and not having cabinet locks.

Teacher B: *“The product occupies a large space and the school does not have convenient equipments, it is also difficult to store the materials since it is single-floor”.*

Teachers have difficulties in storing and using the materials as much as they do in the proper use of the materials.



Teacher C: “*Yes it happens from time to time. Sometimes we take some materials which are used commonly, they have missing parts. Half is there and the other half is not*”.

Supporting this outcome, Çetin (2004) has revealed that there are problems in proper use and storage of the materials in his study. The reason to this can be accepted as the fact that buildings are not constructed suitable for special education schools. Necessary arrangements for the usage and storage of the materials can be made by the school administration.

As a consequence of the interviews with the teachers, it is evident that teachers have some difficulties with the students’ behavioral and learning characteristics, with other school staff, with the physical aspects of the classrooms and school, education programmes and materials and it is indicated that these problems change from one teacher to another.

According to these outcomes, the following suggestions can be made: 1. This study is limited to the data collected from teachers who work at special education centers. The same study can be carried out with teachers who are on duty in general education classes which apply inclusive education and with special education teachers who work in source classes.

Moreover, it can be carried out with the special education teachers in state school and special education teachers in private schools, and the outcome can be compared. 2. This study is carried out with qualitative method and it can also be made with quantitative method. 3. By lowering the number of the students in the classroom and by maintaining parent-teacher-student cooperation, teachers can prevent inappropriate behavior and make efficient arrangements in the classroom 4. Arranging the duration of the lesson according to the attention span of the students and placing students in classes according to their inability type and level may help increasing their attention span. Moreover, teacher-parent cooperation may enable the permanence of learning. 5. Providing in-service trainings for the teachers in order to improve their professional knowledge may encourage collaborative work with other colleagues and improve the interaction among them. For doing collaborative work, meeting periodically and sharing things may encourage them to get help from each other. 6. Training the staff in assisted services about the characteristics of the students at school before beginning to work, may help the staff become more conscious. 7. Making proper physical arrangements according to the students with special needs in classrooms and schools that are available may enable them to receive a more qualitative education.

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