

THE SPECIAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN TÜRKIYE

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Abstract

The scope of all educational arrangements offered to individuals with special needs in Special Education Services in Türkiye is quite wide. In this context, these services are diversified in all types and levels from early childhood to non-formal education. General Directorate of Special Education Guidance and Counseling Services (Özel Eğitim Rehberlik ve Danışma Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü- ÖRGM) is one of the leading institutions authorized for Education Services for individuals with special needs in Türkiye. It is seen that there are many different Special Education Schools affiliated to the General Directorate. These schools have been opened for various types of disabilities at primary, secondary, and vocational education levels. In this article, all the institutions affiliated with the General Directorate in Türkiye have been discussed: Institutions related to preschool education and early childhood education, Education of Children with Chronic Diseases, Special education institutions for individuals with multiple disabilities, Preparation for group education, Supplementary Education Activities and Family Education, Schools, and institutions opened for individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism, Special Education Practice School and Education Job Application Center, Special Education Vocational School, Educational practices through integration, Guidance and Research centers, Institutions opened for the education of gifted individuals, General Directorate of Private Education Institutions and Private Education Services, Other institutions and organizations with activities related to Special Education. This article aims to analyze the Institutions for the education of children with special needs in Türkiye.

Keywords: Special Education, Special Institutions, Students with Special Educational Needs, Guidance and Counseling Services.

Introduction

Education has a role to play in changing the lives of all people around the world, opening opportunities and potentials for development and change. But as important as that is, it is not enough to simply get children into school. Children need quality education that will help them fully utilize their potential and increase their opportunities to become happy, healthy, successful, and members of society that will contribute to their personal and society's development (Chichevska-Jovanova, Rashikj- Canevska, 2022).

Special education and rehabilitation broadly speaking, represents a scientific field that deals with the prevention, detection, assessment, intervention/treatment, education, and social protection of children and adults with developmental disabilities (Li, & Potmėšil, 2016). Special education refers to educational work with children and adults with developmental disabilities, rehabilitation implies a clinical aspect, while the sociological component runs through both mentioned subfields and at the same time represents a separate domain within its theoretical specifications. It should be taken into account that here we are talking about a strict division, which is not normally present - all three aspects are tightly connected and form a unique process (Jovanović et al., 2019). As a scientific field, it shares its roots with other sciences within humanistic and social groups and therefore belongs to these groups.

Special education in Turkey; The quality of the services provided, the rights provided by legal regulations, non-governmental organizations, and individuals from different segments of the society increase day by day. These rights granted to disabled citizens have been guaranteed by taking important steps at the constitutional

level regarding education services, social assistance, and promotion of participation in working life for the disabled. and securing their rights is an obligation of being a social state (Demirtaş, 2019).

The concept of special education is defined in the Special Education Services Regulation of the Ministry of National Education (2018), as follows: "Education programs developed to meet the educational and social needs of individuals who differ significantly from their peers in terms of their individual and developmental characteristics and educational qualifications, and with specially trained personnel, are appropriate. It is defined as "education carried out in an environment" (Aydın, 2015). Special education is the whole of education services provided to students who differ significantly from normal student characteristics, individually planned and aiming to maximize the individual's possibility of living independently (Uçuş, 2016). As stated in both definitions, individuals who differ significantly from their peers need special education for sustainable development and education, regardless of the direction of the difference. For this reason, special education is a purposeful intervention with education to individuals who feel inadequate in a certain area.

The scope of all educational arrangements offered to individuals with special needs in Special Education Services in Türkiye is quite wide. In this context, these services are diversified in all types and levels from early childhood to non-formal education. General Directorate of Special Education Guidance and Counseling Services (Özel Eğitim Rehberlik ve Danışma Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü- ÖRGM) is one of the leading institutions authorized for Education Services for individuals with special needs in Türkiye (Çitil, 2021). It is seen that there are many different Special Education Schools affiliated to the General Directorate. These schools have been opened for various types of disabilities at primary, secondary, and vocational education levels (Jovanova et al., 2020).

1. Institutions in Türkiye

Guidance and Research Centers

One of the most important institutions affiliated with the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services of the Ministry of National Education is the Guidance and Research Centers. Guidance and Research Centers (RAM) in Turkey have an important place in special education services.

In addition to many guidance and psychological counseling services, diagnosis, and placement procedures are also carried out in RAMs established in provincial or district centers. Guidance and research centers, guidance and psychological counseling services in provinces or districts, and special education services are planned, delivered, and carried out in a coordinated manner. They are institutions that carry out activities for the monitoring and evaluation of services (Melekoğlu et al., 2009).

Guidance and research centers; It consists of two sections, namely the section of guidance and psychological counseling services and the section of special education services. The guidance and psychological counseling services department consists of a sufficient number of personnel assigned by the director of the guidance and research center under the responsibility of the department head. The guidance and psychological counseling services department; fulfills its duties in the fields of school guidance and psychological counseling, psychosocial support, individual and group psychological counseling and guidance, and research and development (Şenel, 1998).

According to the statistics for the year 2019-2020, it is understood that there are 250 Guidance and Research Centers operating in our country and 3695 teachers work there. In the same year, approximately 775 thousand students benefited from these centers. To be placed in inclusion or special educational institutions, an educational evaluation and diagnostic report has to be given by the Guidance and Research Centers. For this reason, the first application or students with special needs whose year has expired renew their report here to

receive support education. These Centers are also following the students' progress every year (Pictures 1 and 2), (Çitil, 2021).



Picture 1 and 2. Assessment in Guidance and Research Center –
Retrieved from: <https://www.memurlar.net/haber/548508/rehberlik-merkezleri-rehber-olamiyor.html>

Institutions related to pre-school education and early childhood education

The care and upbringing of children of preschool age is a form of child protection, which as an activity is organized for care, stay, care, nutrition, educational-educational, sports-recreational, cultural-entertainment activities, measures and activities to improve and preserve health and for encouraging the intellectual, emotional, physical, mental and social development of the child up to six years of age, that is, until inclusion in basic education. In the country, preschool education is carried out in preschool institutions. They offer care and upbringing of children and are obliged to provide a minimum standard for each child under equal conditions without the presence of any form of discrimination. The need in these institutions, and the entire educational system in general, is to provide conditions to develop the potential of each child to the maximum (Eres, 2010).

In recent years, as a result of government programs, development plans, and decisions in national education councils, preschool education has been given importance in Turkey. According to the Special Education Services Regulation, preschool education is compulsory for children who have completed 36 months and who need special education. Individuals in need of special education must continue their preschool education in the same class or special education classes with their peers who do not have disabilities within the scope of inclusion practices in preschool education institutions. However, in our country, Special Education Preschool institutions can be opened within special schools and institutions.

In this context, it is seen that the number of special education preschool institutions within the special education schools has increased recently (Picture 3), (Çitil, 2021).



Picture 3. Preschool Special Education-

Retrieved from: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/egitim/ozel-cocuklara-anaokulu-egitimi-28357214>

Schools and institutions opened for individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism

Special schools are those that provide an education for children with a special educational need or disability. There are many different types of special schools, but essentially, they all educate children whose needs cannot be met within a mainstream setting, and whose parents have agreed to or requested a special school placement. The majority of the special education schools in Turkiye consist of schools and institutions opened for students with intellectual disabilities and students with autism. In schools opened for students with mild intellectual disabilities in our country, special classes can be opened for students with mild autism. In these schools, students follow the primary education program, and an Individual Education Plan is prepared for students based on this program. The class size of students with intellectual disabilities is a maximum of ten, and the class of students with autism consists of a maximum of four students (Picture 4). When it comes to special education practice schools opened for individuals with moderate or severe intellectual disability and individuals with autism the education is organized in levels- First level (1, 2, 3 and 4 classes) 2nd level (5, 6, 7 and 8 classes), (Melekoğlu, 2014).



Picture 4. Special school for students with Intellectual disability

Retrieved from: <https://www.neoldu.com/istanbul-avrupa-yakasinda-zihinsel-engelliler-icin-egitim-veren-okullar-8901h.htm>

Educational practices through inclusion

Inclusive education is based on the human rights-based approach defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Concept for Inclusive Education says: "Inclusive education is a process that meets and responds to the diverse needs of children, youth and adults by increasing participation in learning, in school and the community. It involves judicious adaptation of educational content, approaches, organization, and strategies to enable quality education for all. Inclusive education implies that all children are included and accepted, with particular attention to children who may be marginalized, discriminated against, or excluded from the educational system. They, regardless of their potentials or weaknesses in some areas, are included in regular classes and are provided with adequate conditions for learning, progress, and participation in the life of the school." Inclusive education is a broad concept that covers all groups of children. The main goal of inclusion is to encourage the development of all children. Inclusion means encompassing, that is, inclusion of children with special needs in the regular preschool and school system and acceptance of their diversity so that everyone benefits from it (Chichevska-Jovanova & Rashikj-Canevska, 2022).

In Türkiye, the main services offered by the Ministry of National Education in the field of special education are inclusive education practices. According to the 4th article of the Special Education Services directive, education through mainstreaming; is defined as 'the education given full-time with their peers or part-time in special education classes by providing support education services to these individuals to ensure that individuals with special education needs interact with other individuals of all types and levels and achieve their educational goals at the highest level'. Students who are directed to education through inclusion can continue their education full-time in the same class with their peers who do not have disabilities, as well as part-time in special education classes, according to the current legislation. Based on this program, an Individual Education Plan is prepared for each student. For these students, appropriate environmental arrangements are made in their schools and a support education room is opened (Çitil, 2021).

As of the 2019/2020 academic year in our country, there are 321,605 inclusive students. According to MEB statistics, 1652 students benefit from mainstreaming services in 174 schools, classrooms, and institutions during the pre-school period. In our country, 119.307 students are studying as inclusive students at the primary school level. At the secondary school level, 142,670 students are studying as inclusive students.

The number of all special education students in our country is 425.774. In this context, approximately 75% of all special education students are inclusion students (Picture 5), (Çitil, 2021).



Picture 5. Inclusion-

Retrieved from: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/kaynastirma-sinifi-herkesi-zorluyor-2609632>

Preparation for group education, additional education activities, and family education

Individual education training is carried out to prepare the students who have not gained toilet training, have intense behavioral problems, and cannot adapt to group training. The practice in which individual training is provided to prepare the students who have not been able to get toilet training, show intense behavioral problems, and cannot adapt to group training in special education schools where special education programs are applied and in the classrooms where these programs are applied is called group training preparation practice (Eres, 2010).

Individual Education Plans development unit determines the students who will take this training, the weekly activity hours that the students will take, and the planning of the educational activities that will be carried out, in a way that does not exceed 40% of the total weekly class hours. Additional education activities, on the other hand, are supportive education offered by the school administration in line with the decision of the Individual Education Plan development unit for students with special educational needs. These trainings are conducted one-on-one or with a maximum of three students with the same type of disability and the educational activity is planned as two classes hours per week for each student, carried out by special education teachers (Şenel, 1998).

Family education is one of the important education services that should be provided in private education institutions. It includes all kinds of guidance and education services to be given to the family to contribute to the education of students with special educational needs of all types and levels (Picture 6), (Çitil, 2021).



Picture 6. Additional Education Activities- Retrieved from: <https://nuhunmerkezi.com/golge-ogretmen-egitim-programi-basliyor/>

Special education institutions for individuals with multiple disabilities

Special education classes can be opened in educational institutions, especially in special education schools, for students of compulsory education age with more than one disability. Combined classroom practice and special education programs are applied in the classrooms (Bayrakçı, 2009). Evaluation of the success of the students is made according to the Individual Education Programs, which are prepared based on the special education program they follow. Class sizes consist of a maximum of 4 students. Educational Activities are implemented by special education teachers (Picture 7), (Melekoğlu, 2014).



Picture 7. Individual education for a student with multiple disabilities-

Retrieved from: <http://www.cokengelsiz.com/ornek-etkinlik/>

Education of Children with Chronic Diseases

According to Çitil (2021), special education services for children with chronic diseases can be carried out in two different environments apart from special schools and inclusion practices. The first of these environments is the hospital classes opened for children in health institutions, and the second is home education services for children who cannot directly benefit from the education institution. It is essential to provide home education services to individuals who need special education at the age of preschool, primary school, secondary school, and high school, who cannot directly benefit from education and training institutions. Special education teachers, preschool teachers, classrooms, and other field teachers are assigned to provide this service. Hospital classes can be opened within the Ministry of Education for the students in need of special education at the age of pre-school, primary school, secondary school, and high school, who are hospitalized in public and private health institutions and have chronic diseases, to continue their education. Educational service is provided with the written request of the parent and the written opinion of the doctor responsible for the treatment of the student. In the hospital classrooms, the education is planned to be at least 10 hours of classes per week for one student (Picture 8).



Picture 8. Education for hospitalized students-

Retrieved from: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/saglik/losemili-cocuklar-hastanede-egitim-aliyor/1301880>

Special Education Practice Schools, Vocational Education Application Centers, and Special Education Vocational Schools

Special Education Practice Schools are institutions in which programs are implemented for learning self-care and basic life skills of preschool and primary school education children with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities who do not benefit from general education programs. In these schools, they are developing functional academic skills and ensuring their adaptation to society and these schools are organized as a four-year first and second level. Vocational Education Application Centers are the continuation of these schools as the third four-year level. They provide vocational and special education services for individuals with special needs (Picture 9), (Melekođlu et al, 2009).

The vocational schools are opened for developing the basic life skills of individuals who have completed their primary education and cannot continue their general and vocational secondary education programs, who need special education, to ensure their adaptation to society, and to gain knowledge and skills for work and profession. The education period of special education vocational schools is four years and the program is by the level of the students' needs. Lessons are implemented in practical workshops (Çitil, 2021).

The number of students benefiting from the inclusion process in general education in Türkiye is considerably higher than those in secondary education. This way, it is notable that thousands of students either cannot continue their education or go to vocational special education institutions.



Picture 9. Vocational Education Application Center-

Retrieved from: https://haciselimaga.meb.k12.tr/icerikler/dunya-down-sendromlular-gunu_12664791.html

Special schools for visually impaired students

In our country, there is no systematic education system for children with visual impairment in the pre-school period. Children with visual impairment can only benefit from systematic educational activities when they reach school age. There are three types of educational settings in which visually impaired children attend: boarding schools for the visually impaired, special classrooms, and inclusion in general schools.

There are 15 boarding primary schools for the visually impaired in our country. Children diagnosed as blind by ophthalmologists are admitted to these schools. The "Primary Education Program" prepared by the Ministry of National Education is followed in schools. In schools for the visually impaired, tactile and hearing-based education is carried out, regardless of the sensory channels preferred by the students (İşlek, 2017).

There are two types of special class arrangements for visually impaired children in our country. First; It is a special class arrangement in which visually impaired children attend the regular school. The second of the special class arrangements is the low vision classes in Primary School for the Visually Impaired. Depending on the sensory channels preferred by the students in the classrooms, reading, and writing are taught with printed materials or Braille alphabet. Electronic devices and non-optical tools are used so that students can use their vision more efficiently (Picture 10), (Eres, 2010).

Some of the students with visual impairment attend education in general schools with the inclusion process.



Picture 10. Education of visually impaired students-

Retrieved from: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/yasam/arkadasindan-etkilenip-gorme-engelli-ogrencilere-isik-oldu/1686090>

Special Schools for Students with Hearing Impairment

Special education schools provide preschool, primary, and secondary education for hearing-impaired students. Except for pre-school education, students with hearing impairment are educated at boarding and daytime schools at all levels. In the pre-school education of hearing-impaired children, some basic behaviors necessary for daily life are taught and children are prepared for primary education. In addition, importance is given to hearing-impaired students being educated together with their peers in regular schools. Efforts are being made to disseminate these practices, which are defined as "inclusion". In this way, it is ensured that they share their life with their peers socially and emotionally (Karasu, 2017).

Organizing the environment in the education of hearing-impaired children greatly affects the quality of education. The classrooms must be insulated, equipped with appropriate tools and equipment, and children's participation in educational activities with individual group hearing aids. Our Ministry continues its efforts to provide appropriate educational environments for schools for the hearing impaired and special classes for the hearing impaired. Lip comprehension and voice training activities in primary schools for the hearing impaired are organized within the Turkish lesson and by the behavioral development of the children (Picture 11), (Eres, 2010).

Among the students who graduated from primary schools for the hearing impaired and from the special classroom inclusion program, those who are eligible are placed in Multi-Program High Schools for the Hearing Impaired or Industrial Vocational or Vocational High Schools. In these schools, the students with hearing impairment are given vocational education as well as academic education.

There are 42 primary and secondary schools for the hearing impaired throughout Turkey. According to MEB data, 2283 hearing-impaired students received education in these schools in 2016. Students who graduate from these schools can go to 21 vocational high schools across the country if they want to continue their education at the school for the hearing impaired. At the university level, Anadolu University Integrated School for the Disabled is the only place that provides special education for the hearing impaired (Çitil, 2021).



Picture 11. Education of hearing impaired students-
Retrieved from: <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/bu-isareti-gorun-artik-40827381>

Institutions opened for the education of gifted students

In our country, gifted/talented students study with their typically developing peers. These students receive support in the support education rooms in their schools. There are also Science and Art Centers (BİLSEM-Bilim ve Sanat Merkezleri) implementing additional education for gifted and talented students. The Science and Art Education Centers are institutions that have been opened to enable gifted and talented students to use their talents at the highest level. There is BİLSEM in every city. Students who start the Science and Art Center are taken to a 5-stage education program. All programs are prepared by teachers in a student-centered manner, in a way that will develop students' creativity, different approaches to problems, and their ability to find solutions and prepare them for the conditions in adulthood. During the implementation of the programs, special education methods and techniques, and special materials which are completely different from formal education are used. Education is provided with a process-oriented, project-based learning model and students are expected to realize products/projects that meet the desired qualifications.

The Five Stages Education Program includes an Orientation Program, a Support Training Program, a Recognizing Individual Talents Program, a Special Talents Development Program, and a Project Production/Management Program (Picture 12), (Baykoç et al., 2012).



Picture 12. Education of gifted students-
from: <https://www.milatgazetesi.com/haber/bilim-ve-sanat-merkezleri-gucleniyor-6567/>

Conclusion

According to the 2019-2020 statistics of the Ministry of Education, the number of students diagnosed with disabilities in educational institutions is 425.774. When Science and Art Center (Gifted and Talented) students are added (57.360) to this number, we can conclude that approximately 500,000 students benefit from special education services in Türkiye. From this point of view, it is seen that a significant part of our country's population consists of students who need special education. The education of students with special needs in Türkiye is under the responsibility of the Ministry of National Education. Various units within the Ministry provide the functioning of special education. In this context, the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services is the institution directly responsible for the functioning of special education services in public institutions and schools. In this context, there are special education services offered at levels such as early childhood and preschool education, primary and secondary education, higher education, and non-formal education. In addition, the special education services regulation provides services such as home and hospital education and inclusive education. Special education services are also offered in the form of schools and classes for special needs as well as institutions for gifted and talented students.

The Turkish special education system includes early childhood education, education of individuals with multiple disabilities, home education services, hospital education services, preparation for group education, complementary education activities, family education services, etc. The principles of the education programs used in the field of special education, such as the individualized education programs and the education programs of the Science and Art Centers are also included, as well as the education practices through inclusion/integration and the special schools and institutions.

It is a constitutional right to offer equal educational opportunities to all individuals in line with contemporary developments in the world and our country. By the principle of equality of opportunity in education, every individual needs an educational environment suitable for their characteristics in the society they live in and where they can realize their potential. In providing and supporting the educational environments needed by individuals with special needs. Special education is a constantly developing field that is included in the education system of every society and is based on the access of students with special needs to educational opportunities like every individual.

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