



## Opinions and Practices of Social Studies Teachers on Inclusive Education \*

Beyza Bayram <sup>1</sup>, Mustafa Öztürk <sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, it was emphasized that quality and inclusive education form the basis of a sustainable future and development. Inclusive education is an understanding of education that values diversity, arises based on the principle of social justice and equality, and is committed to ensuring that no children be excluded from the education process for reasons such as gender, social class, health, and success. Inclusive education practices are becoming widespread all over the world and importance is given to channelling students with differences to general education institutions. In this study, it was intended to help to identify problems and needs of the existing education system by determining the opinions, knowledge, and practices of social studies teachers for inclusive education in Turkey. The study was carried out using a survey model with 313 social studies teachers. A questionnaire was used as the data collection tool. According to the findings of the research, although teachers generally have positive opinions about inclusive education, it was seen that a significant portion of them did not have an adequate and efficient level of knowledge and in-class practices. The rate of participants who saw themselves successful in terms of inclusive education practices varies depending on disadvantaged student groups. In addition, teachers' personal opinions, perceptions of self-efficacy, and classroom practices for inclusive education differ for variables such as gender, professional experience, educational status, and prior knowledge. Participants saw the most important barriers to inclusive education as curriculum, social perception, and practices.

### Keywords

Inclusive education  
Social studies  
Teacher  
Differentiated instruction  
Teacher perceptions  
Teacher practices

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<sup>1</sup> Erciyes University, Institute of Education Sciences, Turkey, [beyza.byrm38@gmail.com](mailto:beyza.byrm38@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Erciyes University, Faculty of Education, Dept. of Turkish and Social Sciences Education, Turkey, [mustafaozt@gmail.com](mailto:mustafaozt@gmail.com)

## Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a global development agenda, consisting of 17 goals called "Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", to design a better and sustainable future for all people. The fourth goal of the 2030 Agenda (Sustainable Development Goal 4 [SDG4]) emphasizes that the basis of a sustainable future and development is quality and inclusive education (United Nations [UN], 2015). Almost all of the seven sub-goals defined under SDG4 refer to an inclusive understanding of education. The fifth sub-goal is "By 2030, by eliminating gender inequality in education, it is necessary to provide equal access to all levels of education and vocational education, including children with disabilities, local peoples, and vulnerable children" (UN, 2015) and emphasizes in particular, the need to ensure equal access for vulnerable children to all education levels.

The concept of inclusive education evolves according to the needs and conditions of countries and its scope has been gradually expanding. Turkey has become one of the countries affected by the civil war in Syria, which began in 2011, causing millions of refugees to arrive in Turkey. With the arrival of a large number of refugees in a short time, many policies started to be implemented in the country. The most important of these is number 6458, the Foreigners and International Protection Law, which came into force in 2013 and the Temporary Protection Regulation issued in 2014 based on this law. According to this law and regulation, Syrians, who have taken refuge in Turkey, have been granted temporary protection status. One of the most important policies implemented with this status is related to the regulation of the educational rights of over a million school-aged children belonging to refugee families. In this context, in 2015 the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) decided that the children of refugee families receive education in Turkish public schools with their Turkish peers. Based on this decision, the project "Training of National Education Staff with Foreign Students in Class" was launched in cooperation with UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) in 2017 to integrate Syrian students in Turkish public schools effectively. This project was also a pioneering initiative for inclusive education practices in Turkey that focused on refugee children (Bakioğlu, 2019; Öztürk, Tepetaş Cengiz, Köksal, & İrez, 2017). Based on the experience gained, MoNE, in cooperation with UNICEF, carried out further projects to broaden the understanding of inclusiveness by targeting other disadvantaged groups such as children with disabilities, children affected by violence, migration, and disasters to ensure that the inclusive understanding of education is adopted by teachers and no child is left behind (MoNE, 2018). Thus, the inclusive education approach has become one of the defining characteristics of the Turkish education system since 2017.

Inclusive education is a concept that has appeared frequently in discussions since the 1970s and generally develops within the framework of human rights. It was used as a concept for children with special education needs to benefit from the right to education and to be included in the educational process in the early years (Whitburn & Plows, 2017). However, due to the changing social needs and progress in humanitarian sensitivities since the 1990s, it is observed that all children, who are excluded or discriminated against due to their various characteristics, are increasingly included in the concept of inclusive education (Ferguson, 2008; Slee, 2019; Whitburn & Plows, 2017). In fact, international organizations such as UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and UNICEF do not reduce the concept of inclusive education only to students with special educational needs, but use it in a broader sense. Accordingly, inclusive education is a concept that emphasizes the values of social justice, equality, respect for differences and tolerance in education by stressing the need to support such groups of children from poor, rural, refugee, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, who are systematically unable to receive adequate educational opportunities compared to their peers (UNESCO, 2001; Öztürk et al., 2017).

Inclusive education is defined by UNESCO (2009) as valuing social diversity, such that no one is excluded from the education process for reasons such as gender, ethnicity, health, success, social participation, and social class, and everyone is accepted and embraced by the system. The inclusive education approach also emphasizes taking precautions to develop in children a sense of belonging to

school socially and psychologically, apart from ensuring their access to the school environment and physical participation (UNICEF, 2012). Based on the questions asked by Florian (2008), the right to education not only requires the right to access education (school attendance) but also includes quality education for the excluded children through equal opportunities and according to their individual needs.

Every student has a different learning style, past experience, readiness level, affective and cognitive characteristics, interest, and socio-cultural background (Öztürk & Palancı, 2015). Thus, only if the perceptions and practices of relevant stakeholders are inclusive, can children, with all their differences, benefit from their right to education adequately and effectively, receive a quality education, be accepted, and be successful in their schools and classrooms (UNESCO, 2016). In recent years, there has been a tendency towards the dissemination of inclusive education practices in the educational policies of various countries, and thus, directing students with different educational needs, including children with disabilities, to general schools is an important indicator that this perspective has started to become widespread (see Clark, Dyson, & Millward, 2019; Ferguson, 2008; Forlin & Chambers, 2011).

Since inclusive education involves a dynamic process that changes and develops according to each country, society, and time, its applications do not have a standard approach, plan, or model. However, it is important to establish effective cooperation between stakeholders. Compared to other stakeholders of education, such as family and politicians, teachers play a key role in inclusive education (Anderson & Boyle, 2015) because the teacher is the main planner and practitioner of the learning-teaching process. The effectiveness of inclusive education is directly affected by teachers' skills, such as ensuring active participation of students, supporting them with encouragement, communication, classroom, and time management (Jordan, Schwart, & McGhie-Richmond, 2009; Pantić & Florian, 2015).

According to Kis (2016), the most important problems of teachers regarding inclusive education are lack of pedagogical skills and inexperience. The European Agency (2015) stated that inclusive teachers, with regards to pedagogy, are educators who can critically evaluate their students' readiness to meet their individual learning needs, plan competencies to be acquired, and perform effective practice and assessment. Then, what should effective practice and assessment be in inclusive education? Inclusive learning and teaching processes can be implemented effectively with differentiated instruction, which is based on active learning and the use of group work (Öztürk et al. 2017). In differentiated instruction, the active participation of students is ensured by employing flexible time and learning environment and adaptations are made in content, instruction, assessment, and learning environment by taking into account the individual differences, interests, and needs of the students (Tomlinson, 2007).

Perhaps more important than the skill and experience of the teachers are their perceptions and attitudes towards disadvantaged children (Forlin & Lian, 2008; Öztürk, 2019; Savolainen, Engelbrecht, Nel, & Malinen, 2012) because, like all people, teachers will not display behaviours that they do not believe in or deem necessary. In inclusive education, teachers are expected to show an attitude that respects individual differences, is free from prejudices, and positive towards disadvantaged groups (Kielblock, 2018; Monsen, Ewing, & Kwoka, 2014). In this context, UNESCO (2013) described inclusive teachers as individuals who possess the knowledge, skills, and values they need against discrimination, think critically and reflectively, solve problems, and have gained attitudes, roles, and competencies to organize teacher and student relations effectively to include disadvantaged groups in education.

In international literature, many studies examine teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education (Kielblock, 2018; Messiou, 2017). However, in his survey study, Messiou (2017) stated that the majority of these studies focus on a certain group of children (i.e. children with special needs). Similarly, Nilholm and Göransson (2017) asserted that especially, teacher attitudes towards children with special education needs are examined in literature. In this context, Kielblock (2018) noted that empirical studies on the inclusion of all students are insufficient in the world. Likewise, the review of inclusive education literature in Turkey indicates that studies that examine teachers' knowledge, skills

and attitudes are typically carried out within the framework of special education and the number of studies involving all children is limited (for exemption see, Bayram, 2019; Şimşek, 2019; Özokcu, 2018).

Based on the gap in literature and primary role of teachers in inclusive education practices, the research topic of this study was to determine the opinions and attitudes of social studies teachers towards inclusive education. In the Turkish education system, social studies course plays the biggest role in providing students with core inclusive values such as respect for human rights, tolerance, equality, respect for differences, and justice, and skills such as empathy, communication, social participation, and conflict management. Teachers of this course have an important role in providing these competencies to students and providing them with an effective learning experience in social studies. Therefore, in this study, it was aimed to evaluate social studies teachers' thoughts, knowledge, and practices for inclusive education in the context of various disadvantaged groups. In this context, the research questions, for which answers were sought in the study, are as follows:

- What do social studies teachers think about inclusive education and their self-efficacy in terms of inclusive education?
- To what extent do social studies teachers reflect an inclusive education approach to their practices?
- What are the barriers for inclusive education according to the opinions of social studies teachers?

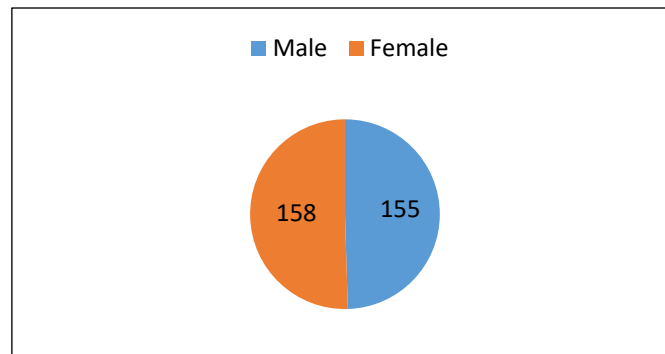
### Method

This study was carried out using the survey model. The main reason for utilizing a survey method was to analyse the current situation by describing the opinions and practices of social studies teachers concerning inclusive education, that survey models are suitable for research aiming to uncover an existing situation in its current form (Karasar, 2009). Although survey studies are useful for describing the topic under examination, it does not provide sufficient opportunities for in-depth examination (e.g. revealing the causes and origins of the situation) (Öztürk, 2014). In the study, three main disadvantaged groups were identified as the context of inclusive education: a) Children with disabilities, b) Foreign students with insufficient Turkish skills, and c) Disadvantaged students in various respects (those with the potential to be excluded by society, such as Roma and street children, children with trauma due to disaster and violence, children with separated families, such as those who live in a childcare home, etc.). The reason for selecting these groups is that they have come to the fore in field studies conducted collaboratively by MoNE and UNICEF under Turkish conditions (UNICEF, 2015, 2018, 2019).

#### *Participants*

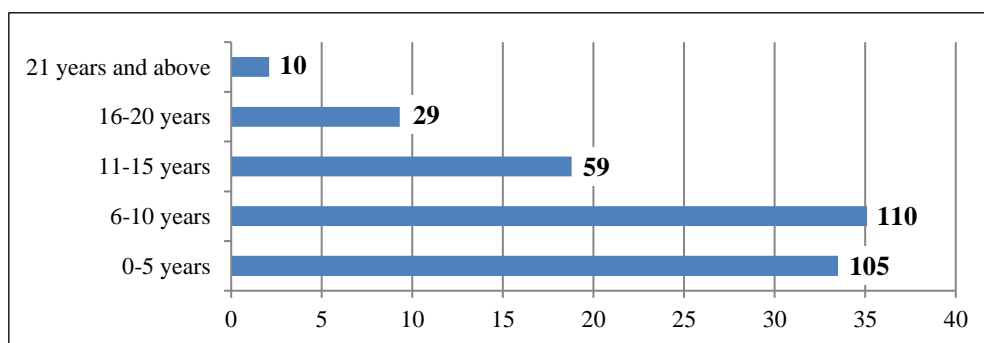
The participants were determined according to the convenience sampling method to make the sample accessible and applicable due to time, financial, and personnel restrictions (Büyükoztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2008). 313 social studies teachers, who work in various provinces of Turkey, were reached in the study. Participants were informed about the study before completing the questionnaire, were asked to complete it voluntarily, and it was stated that they would not be identified or disclosed in any way.

According to the results of the analysis of the data related to the categorical variables in the questionnaire, 50.5 percent of the participants were female and 49.5 percent were male (Figure 1).



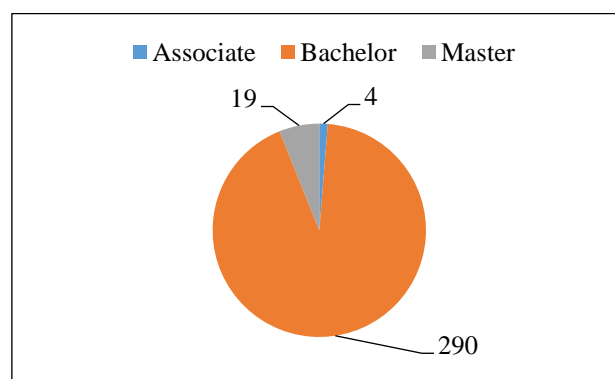
**Figure 1.** Gender chart

While 35.1 percent of the participants had 6-10 years of professional experience, 33.52 percent of them had 0-5 years of experience. These groups were followed by those with 11-15 years (18.8%), 16-20 years (9.3%), and 21 years or more (3.2%) professional experience in descending order (Figure 2).



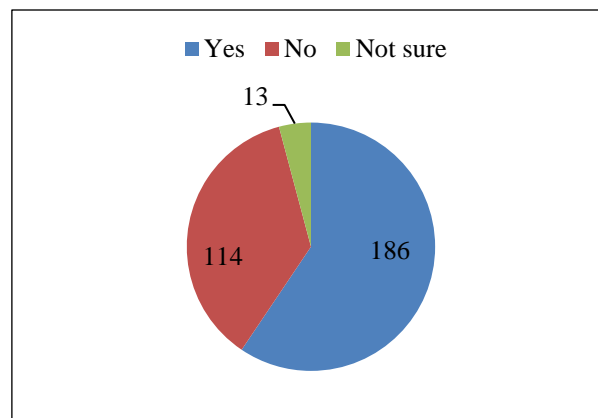
**Figure 2.** Professional experience of the participants

When the participants were examined in terms of their higher education graduation, it was seen that teachers holding undergraduate degrees participated in the study the most (92.7%). They were followed by teachers with a master's degree (9.1%) and those with a two-year education degree (1.3%) (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Education level of the participants

More than half of the participants (59.4%) stated that they had heard of the concept of inclusive education before, whereas 36.4 percent stated that they had not heard of the concept before. 4.2 percent were unsure whether they had heard it or not.



**Figure 4.** Distribution of prior knowledge of the participants

#### ***Data Collection Tool***

The questionnaire developed in the study was composed of five sections to identify the problems and needs in the field regarding inclusive education. In the first part of the questionnaire, there were questions to reveal the demographic information of the participants and their prior knowledge about inclusive education. In the second and third part, questions were asked to determine the opinions of the participants about inclusive education and their opinions about their self-efficacy, respectively. The fourth section deals with questions that examine the practices of teachers in the classroom, while the last section addresses questions about problems faced by teachers concerning inclusive education.

#### ***Data Collection Process and Analysis***

97 of the participants in this study were reached via an in-service training seminar conducted centrally by MoNE in Erzurum, in the summer of 2018 and 216 were reached electronically in the 2018-2019 academic year. The responses given by the participants to the questionnaire were analysed by SPSS 25.0 software, their frequency and percentages were calculated, and tables and graphics were created. The questionnaires of 23 participants, who did not adequately answer categorical variables, marked all questions the same or left the questionnaire largely incomplete, were excluded from the analysis. Open-ended questions were subjected to content analysis and coded by two authors independently. Frequency calculations of the codings were conducted and the relevant codes were brought together under relevant themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data was then quantified by calculating frequency and percentages in the Microsoft Excel program.

#### ***Validity and Reliability***

The questionnaire was used as a measurement tool in the study. To ensure the content validity of the measurement tool, the questionnaire items were created by examining related literature (Clark et al., 2019; Ferguson, 2008; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Jordan et al., 2009; Kielblock, 2018; Kis, 2016; Monsen et al., 2014). Likewise, to ensure the criterion validity of the questionnaire, the measurement instruments used in other studies in literature were examined (Kern, 2006; Kielblock, 2018; Peng, Potměšilová, & Potměšil, 2013; Saloviita, 2018) and the correspondence between the questionnaire and other instruments in literature was established (Arıkan, 2013; Karras, 1997). Additionally, to ensure both the content and face validity of the tool, feedback was obtained from two academics, whose expertise is in inclusive education and five teachers with master's degrees, who had provided in-service trainings to teachers on inclusive education through projects carried out by the partnership of MoNE and UNICEF. Since the measurement tool developed in the study was not a scale, its construct validity was not examined. At the end of the validity studies, piloting was carried out to check the questionnaire in terms of form, language, and expression. Piloting was carried out with four social studies teachers and the questionnaire was finalized by making language and meaning corrections in line with the feedback received.

After the validity studies, it was determined that the questions of the tool were collected in three different dimensions apart from open-ended questions: (a) Teachers' Views on Inclusive Practices, (b) Teachers' Opinions on their Self-efficacy, and (c) Teachers' In-Class Practices. As stated by Arıkan (2013), to measure the reliability (i.e. internal consistency) of the questionnaire, the Cronbach-alpha reliability coefficient was calculated. The Cronbach-alpha internal consistency coefficients were calculated as 0.85 for 15 items collected in the dimension of teacher views for inclusive education, 0.80 for 6 items collected in the teacher self-efficacy dimension, and 0.81 for 7 items collected in the dimension of classroom practices of teachers. The total Cronbach-alpha internal consistency coefficient that included the 28 items of the questionnaire was 0.83. While Arıkan (2013) stated that a Cronbach-alpha coefficient greater than 0.70 was sufficient for the reliability of a questionnaire, Kılıç (2016) asserted that if the Cronbach-alpha coefficient was in the range of 0.7 and 0.9, the reliability of the measurement tool should be accepted as "good". Accordingly, it can be said that the reliability of the questionnaire is good because the coefficients of the sub-dimensions and all items of the questionnaire are in the range of 0.80 and 0.85.

With two open-ended questions in the questionnaire, participants were asked to identify inclusive education and barriers to inclusive education. The responses given to these questions were analysed by the content analysis method. To test the reliability of the analysis performed, consensus in the coding was examined, as specified by Miles and Huberman (1994). The reliability formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (*ibid.*) is "Percentage of overlap (P) = Consensus (Na) / (Consensus (Na) + Disagreement (Nd)) x 100". Based on the formula proposed by Miles and Huberman, the compatibility rate between the codings performed by the two authors was found to be P = 90.4. The 90 percent agreement rate ( $\geq 0.70$ ) shows that the coding performed independently by the two authors was highly acceptable.

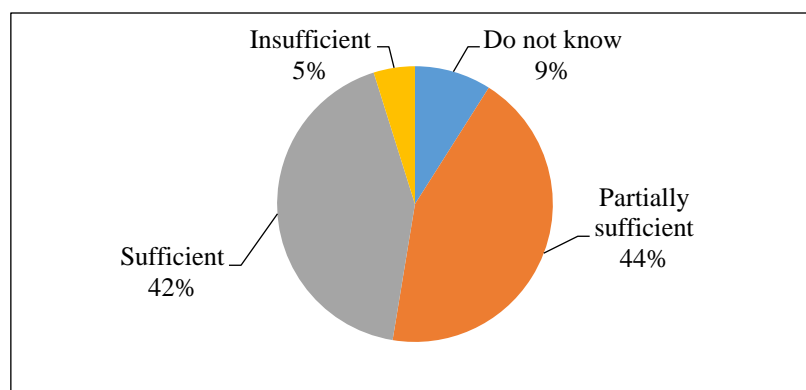
As a result of the validity and reliability studies, it was assumed that the data collection tool used in the study was valid and reliable. In addition, it was assumed that the academics, whose views were consulted, were Turkey's leading experts on inclusive education, participants responded to the questionnaire sincerely and participants represented social studies teachers. However, the study was limited to the 2018-2019 academic year and the data collection tool.

## Results

### *Teachers' Levels of Defining Inclusive Education*

In the study, it was examined whether the current definition of inclusive education given by international organizations such as UNESCO and UNICEF were known sufficiently by the participants. In this context, UNESCO's following definition was used for the analysis: Inclusive education values social diversity, no one is excluded from the education process for reasons such as gender, ethnicity, health, success, social participation, or social class, and everyone is accepted and embraced by the system (UNESCO, 2009).

UNESCO's definition includes three fundamental criteria for inclusive education, namely diversity (nobody being excluded from educational processes), equality (ensuring equal rights for all in educational settings) and fair conditions (organizing the learning-teaching process to educate everyone). In the analysis carried out, the definition by participants, who touched all three criteria (including close and similar expressions) in their definition, was accepted as sufficient, while those who only mentioned one or two criteria were categorized as "partially sufficient". Those who gave irrelevant definitions that did not include any of the criteria specified above were considered as "insufficient". Finally, the participants who stated that they did not know the definition were considered under the category of "do not know". 289 of the participants responded to this question in writing. The results of the analysis are presented in Figure 5.



**Figure 5.** The distribution of teachers defining inclusive education

When the responses were examined, it was found that 8.9 percent of the respondents defined inclusive education sufficiently. To illustrate one of those; “it is about involving students with differences in the education system and developing their self-confidence with a sense of achievement in an educational environment, where differences are welcomed, and offering education according to the skills and characteristics of the students” (Questionnaire 35).

43.5 percent of the participants who responded to this question partially defined inclusive education. For example, “all individuals in the society receive education in the same environment, despite their different characteristics (i.e. differences)” (Questionnaire 3).

It was found that a significant proportion of the participants (42.5%) defined inclusive education either insufficiently or differently or were completely unfamiliar with the concept of inclusive education. For example, “it is the understanding of education that covers all age and education levels” (Questionnaire 149).

#### *Opinions of Teachers on Inclusive Education*

The percentage of responses from the participating teachers to the 15 questions constructed to reveal their opinions on inclusive education is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Participants’ Opinions About Inclusive Education Practices

Item	Strongly disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Not sure (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
It is more convenient for mainstreamed students to have education in special education institutions/classrooms separated from non-disadvantaged students.	31.1	26.8	4.8	23.6	13.7
It is more convenient for foreign students with insufficient Turkish skills to study in a school/classroom reserved for them, separated from non-disadvantaged students.	33.5	28.1	2.6	22.4	13.4
It is more convenient for students with the potential to be excluded from society (e.g. Roma and street children), children with trauma (e.g. due to disasters and violence), and children with separated families (e.g. those who live in a childcare home) have education in a school/classroom reserved for them, separated from non-disadvantaged students.	16.9	6.9	5.8	27.8	43.1
Including mainstreamed students in general classes with non-disadvantaged students increases their academic success in social studies course.	26.5	26.5	8.9	24	14.1



**Table 1.** Continued

Item	Strongly disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Not sure (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Including mainstreamed students in general classes with non-disadvantaged students increases the development of their social skills in social studies lesson courses.	28.8	33.5	7.3	20.1	10.2
Including foreign students with insufficient Turkish skills in general classes with non-disadvantaged students increases their academic success in social studies courses.	22	23	9.3	27.7	16
Including foreign students with insufficient Turkish skills in general classes with non-disadvantaged students increases the development of their social skills in social studies courses.	23.3	28.8	7.0	25.6	15.3
Including students with the potential to be excluded from society (e.g. Roma and street children), children with trauma (e.g. due to disasters and violence) and children with separated families (e.g. those who live in a childcare home) in general classes with non-disadvantaged students increases their academic success in social studies courses.	33.5	37.4	6.7	16	6.4
Including students with the potential to be excluded from society (e.g. Roma and street children), children with trauma (e.g. due to disasters and violence) and children with separated families (e.g. those who live in a childcare home) in general classes with non-disadvantaged students increase the development of their social skills in social studies courses.	37.1	38	5.8	12.1	7.0
Including mainstreamed students in general classes with non-disadvantaged students reduces the academic success of non-disadvantaged students in social studies courses.	18.2	15.7	8.6	30.4	27.2
Including mainstreamed students in general classes with non-disadvantaged students reduces the development of social skills of non-disadvantaged students in social studies courses.	15.3	15.3	9.6	31.6	28.1
Including foreign students with insufficient Turkish skills in general classes with non-disadvantaged students reduces the academic success of non-disadvantaged students in social studies courses.	18.8	21.1	9.3	29.4	21.4
Including foreign students with insufficient Turkish skills in general classes with non-disadvantaged students reduces the development of social skills of non-disadvantaged students in social studies courses.	16.3	18.5	8.0	32.9	24.3
Including students with the potential to be excluded from society (e.g. Roma and street children), children with trauma (e.g. due to disasters and violence) and children with separated families (e.g. those who live in a childcare home) in general classes with non-disadvantaged students reduces the academic success of non-disadvantaged students in social studies courses.	13.7	15.3	8.6	33.9	28.4
Including students with the potential to be excluded from society (e.g. Roma and street children), children with trauma (e.g. due to disasters and violence) and children with separated families (e.g. those who live in a childcare home) in general classes with non-disadvantaged students reduces the development of social skills of non-disadvantaged students in social studies courses.	13.4	14.1	8.0	34.2	30.4

As seen in Table 1, more than half of the participants believe that mainstreamed (see MoNE, 2010) and foreign students with insufficient Turkish skills should receive education in special institutions/classes that are separate from other students (57.9% and 61.6%, respectively). While only 13.7 and 13.4 percent of the participants respectively strongly oppose such a practice, it is seen that almost one-third of the participants (31.1% and 33.5% respectively) strongly support the idea of separated institutions for the above-mentioned groups of students. The majority of the participants (70.9%) support the view that other groups of disadvantaged students (e.g. street children, children subjected to violence, and children with broken families) should receive education in general educational institutions.

It was found that a relatively high percentage of the participants, believe in the idea that inclusive education will improve the academic success and social skills of disadvantaged students. In particular, the participants believe that students who have the potential to be excluded by society, will improve their academic success and social skills in [inclusive] general educational institutions (70.9% and 75.1%, respectively). While more than half of the participants (53%) felt that inclusive education would have a positive impact on the academic success of mainstreamed students, this rate dropped to 43% for students whose Turkish language skills are insufficient. While almost half of the participants (52.2%) agree with the idea that inclusive education will improve the social skills of students whose Turkish language skills are inadequate, the rate of those who believe that the social skills of mainstreamed students will improve through inclusive learning environments was 62.5 percent.

In the study, the participants were also asked to express their opinions about whether the academic achievement and the development of social skills of non-disadvantaged students (i.e. considered as not fulfilling the criteria for disadvantaged students in the study) were influenced positively or negatively in [inclusive] general classes. According to the results, approximately 60 percent of the participants (Table 1) believe that disadvantaged students will have no negative impact on the academic performance of non-disadvantaged students. However, there was a relatively different attitude towards students whose Turkish language skills are insufficient, as only half of the participants (50.8%) indicated that this group of students would not adversely affect the academic success of other students.

According to most of the participants, the development of social skills (e.g. communication, empathy, respect for differences, and etiquette) of non-disadvantaged students in [inclusive] general classrooms is not negatively affected. As seen in Table 1, more than half of the participants support the view that inclusive education will not adversely affect the development of social skills of non-disadvantaged students concerning the three disadvantaged groups included in the survey. Nearly half of these participants strongly support this idea. However, it should be noted that the participants were more reluctant to address students whose Turkish language skills are insufficient compared to the other two disadvantaged student groups (Table 1).

Participants typically believe that education with non-disadvantaged peers in general education institutions contributes to the academic success and development of social skills of disadvantaged students. However, the findings presented in Table 1 indicate two points. The first is that participants generally turn to foreign students, who are not proficient in Turkish, with a more negative attitude than the other two groups of students. Secondly, the idea that inclusive learning environments can be positive for both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students is generally supported by 55 to 65 percent. This result points out that a significant number of respondents do not have a positive opinion about inclusive education practices.

#### *Participants' Opinions on Self-Efficacy for Inclusive Education*

The study included questions on measuring participants' self-efficacy levels about the education they undertake for disadvantaged students. The findings are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Respondents' Opinions On Their Self-Efficacy Towards Inclusive Education Practices

Item	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Not sure %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	I have not got such a student %
<b>As a social studies teacher;</b>	11.5	36.1	12.5	28.1	5.8	6.1
... I think I am sufficiently beneficial for the mainstreamed students in my class.						
... I think I am sufficiently beneficial for foreign students with insufficient Turkish language skills in my class.	8.9	24.6	7.7	26.2	5.8	26.8
... I think I am sufficiently beneficial for students with the potential to be excluded from society, children with trauma, and children with separated families in my class.	15.0	47.6	8.0	12.8	4.2	12.5
... I feel comfortable working with mainstreamed students in my class.	16	43.1	8.0	19.5	5.8	7.7
... I feel comfortable working with students, whose Turkish is poor, in my class.	9.6	30.7	7.3	24.6	7.0	20.8
... I feel comfortable working with students with the potential to be excluded from society, children with trauma, and children with separated families in my class.	15.3	43.1	8.9	14.7	5.1	12.8

When the participants' self-efficacy perceptions were examined to determine whether they feel beneficial for their disadvantaged students, it was found that there were differing findings for the three disadvantaged groups addressed in this study. 62.6 percent of the participants (15 percent being strong) believe that they are beneficial to students who have the potential to be excluded by society. However, the proportion of those who think that they are beneficial for mainstreamed students decreases to 47.6 percent, and the rate of those who think that they are beneficial for students whose language is not sufficient drops to 33.5 percent. Given that 26 percent of the participants do not have any foreign children with limited Turkish language skills in their class, it can be said that almost an equal number of participants believe that they are or are not beneficial for foreign students with insufficient Turkish (Table 2).

As seen in Table 2, the participant teachers generally tend to feel comfortable working with disadvantaged students. However, there is also a relatively negative attitude, especially towards students whose Turkish language skills are insufficient. While the proportion of participants who stated that they felt comfortable working with mainstreamed students and students who have the potential to be excluded by the society is almost the same (59.1% and 59% respectively), the rate of those who felt comfortable working with students whose Turkish is insufficient decreased noticeably (40.3%). Likewise, 36.1 percent of the participants stated that they did not feel comfortable working with students whose Turkish was not sufficient.

#### *Classroom Practices of Teachers for Inclusive Education*

Inclusive learning environments require the learning-teaching process to be differentiated, taking into account the individual differences of the students. For this reason, the questionnaire included questions that measure whether the participants perform any differentiation practices in the classroom. The questionnaire addressed four basic differentiation strategies: Process (teaching methods, techniques, and activities), content (resources), assessment, and differentiation of the classroom environment. In other words, by including questions concerning differentiation strategies in the measurement tool, it was tried to measure whether the participants adopt an inclusive pedagogy. Findings of how often the participants use various differentiation practices are provided in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Participants' Classroom Practices For Inclusive Education

Item	Every lesson (%)	About once a week (%)	About once a month (%)	About once a semester (%)	Never (%)
<b>In my lessons in the last semester;</b>					
... I used the textbook as a course resource.	53.7	34.5	7.0	1.6	3.6
... I used different resources and materials for students at different levels [i.e. readiness and ability] during the lesson.	37.1	45.4	12.1	1.9	3.5
... I changed the classroom space and layout.	17.3	36.1	26.5	11.2	8.9
... I used different methods and techniques concurrently by taking into account the levels [i.e. readiness and ability] of my students.	46.0	37.4	13.7	1.6	1.3
... I carried out different activities concurrently according to the levels of the students.	29.7	41.5	21.1	4.5	3.2
... I had small group work in the lesson.	20.1	41.5	27.8	8.3	2.2
... I carried out different assessment practices in the course according to the level of the students.	26.5	35.8	23.0	9.3	5.4

The findings in Table 3 show that the participants mostly perform differentiated practices once a week. Under normal circumstances, teachers are expected to use differentiated instruction in every lesson, because students' differences do not vary from one lesson to another. When the findings were evaluated, it was seen that more than half of the teachers do not use a differentiation strategy in every lesson. The most common differentiation strategy used by the participants is the differentiation of teaching methods and techniques (46%). In differentiated instruction, however, differentiated activities and small group work are usually used depending on the students' level in learning environments in which different teaching methods and techniques are used. According to the findings, only 20.1 percent and 29.7 percent of the participants practice small group work and differentiated activities in every lesson, respectively.

In addition, a differentiated pedagogical approach requires teachers to reorganize the classroom space and layout frequently to perform different types of activities effectively. However, as seen in Table 3, the least used differentiation strategy by the participants is to rearrange the classroom space and layout. While only around a fifth of the participants differentiated the classroom environment, around a third indicated that they changed the classroom layout once a week in the past semester. When these two groups were evaluated together, it appears that approximately half of the participants did not differentiate their classroom space and layout in the lessons they taught last semester.

One of the differentiated instruction strategies is the differentiation of content (i.e. resources used in the lesson). Accordingly, in differentiated learning environments, textbooks are always considered a supplementary resource, because they are standard and, thus, do not take individual differences into account. In classrooms where effective resource differentiation is carried out, the usage rate of different resources and materials is expected to exceed the usage rate of textbooks. As seen in Table 3, 53.7 percent of participants reported using the textbook in every lesson, while only 37.1 percent reported using different resources and materials in every lesson.

When teachers differentiate activities and resources in the classroom based on an understanding of differentiated instruction, they should automatically differentiate the formative assessment they perform in the lesson. For this reason, the number of participants who indicated that they differentiate assessment is expected to be close to the number of participants who indicated that they differentiate the processes and resources used in their lessons. However, as seen in Table 3, only 26.5 percent of the participants stated that they differentiate assessment in every lesson, while 46 and 37.1 percent of them stated that they used different methods or techniques and different sources and materials in their lessons, respectively.

*Chi-Square Test Results for Teachers' Opinions and Self-efficacy Perceptions for Inclusive Education and Teaching Practices*

The Chi-Square independence test was used to determine whether teachers' personal and self-efficacy perceptions and teaching practices differed significantly according to the variables of gender, professional experience, educational level, and prior knowledge of inclusive education. The results of the Pearson Chi-Square analysis of the questionnaire items with significant differences according to the variables are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Chi-Square Results for Participants' Personal Opinions and Self-Efficacy Perceptions towards Inclusive Education and Teaching Practices

	Gender		Professional Level of Experience		education		Prior knowledge	
	$\chi^2$	p	$\chi^2$	p	$\chi^2$	p	$\chi^2$	p
It is more convenient for mainstreamed students to have education in special education institutions/classrooms separated from non-disadvantaged students.	10.7	<b>0.03</b>	18.5	0.29	7.04	0.53	5.16	0.74
Including mainstreamed students in general classes with non-disadvantaged students increases their academic success in social studies courses.	1.71	<b>0.02</b>	32.0	<b>0.01</b>	2.25	0.97	9.12	0.33
Including mainstreamed students in general classes with non-disadvantaged students increases the development of their social skills in social studies lesson courses.	1.21	0.87	33.6	<b>0.00</b>	3.48	0.9	6.02	0.64
Including foreign students with insufficient Turkish skills in general classes with non-disadvantaged students increases the development of their social skills in social studies courses.	0.78	0.94	32.8	<b>0.00</b>	3.74	0.87	5.72	0.67
Including students with the potential to be excluded from society (e.g. Roma and street children), children with trauma (e.g. due to disasters and violence), and children with separated families (e.g. those who live in a childcare home) in general classes with non-disadvantaged students increases their academic success in social studies courses.	0.56	0.96	27.5	0.36	3.98	0.85	18.6	<b>0.01</b>
Including students with the potential to be excluded from society (e.g. Roma and street children), children with trauma (e.g. due to disasters and violence), and children with separated families (e.g. those who live in a childcare home) in general classes with non-disadvantaged students reduces the academic success of non-disadvantaged students in social studies courses.	13.6	<b>0.00</b>	14.5	0.55	8.81	0.35	17.8	<b>0.02</b>
Including students with the potential to be excluded from society (e.g. Roma and street children), children with trauma (e.g. due to disasters and violence), and children with separated families (e.g. those who live in a childcare home) in general classes with non-disadvantaged students reduces the development of social skills of non-disadvantaged students in social studies courses.	11,7	<b>0.01</b>	7.97	0.95	2.36	0.96	14.1	0.07

**Table 4.** Continued

	Gender		Professional Level of Experience				Prior knowledge	
	$\chi^2$	p	$\chi^2$	p	$\chi^2$	p	$\chi^2$	p
... I feel comfortable working with students with the potential to be excluded from society, children with trauma, and children with separated families in my class.	6.04	0.30	32.1	<b>0.04</b>	3.97	0.94	9.38	0.49
In my lessons in the last semester, I used the textbook as a course resource in my lessons.	4.70	0.31	28.6	<b>0.02</b>	12.0	0.14	5.93	0.65
In my lessons in the last semester, I used different resources and materials for my students at different levels [i.e. readiness and ability] during the lessons.	11.0	0.26	26.3	<b>0.04</b>	18.7	<b>0.01</b>	3.64	0.88
In my lessons in the last semester, I used different methods and techniques concurrently by taking into account the levels [i.e. readiness and ability] of my students.	4.19	0.38	10.4	0.84	30.3	<b>0.00</b>	8.63	0.37
In my lessons in the last semester, I carried out different activities concurrently according to the levels of the students.	11.6	<b>0.02</b>	28.4	<b>0.02</b>	15.4	0.05	10.9	0.20
In my lessons in the last semester, I had small group work in the lesson.	6.41	0.17	40.2	<b>0.00</b>	19.4	<b>0.01</b>	10.6	0.22
In my lessons in the last semester, I carried out different assessment practices in the course according to the level of the students.	9.29	0.54	32.8	<b>0.00</b>	29.0	<b>0.00</b>	8.81	0.35

p&lt;0.05

As stated in Table 4, there are significant differences in personal perceptions of the participants according to the variables of gender, professional experience, and prior knowledge. In terms of gender, compared to male teachers, female teachers are more reluctant for mainstreamed students to have separate education and they are more likely to believe that these students will improve their social skills if they have education with non-disadvantaged students. In addition, female teachers are more likely to think that the students who have the potential to be excluded by the society, will not have any negative effects on the academic achievement and development of social skills of the non-disadvantaged students.

According to the professional experience variable, there are significant differences in three items regarding teachers' perceptions. Teachers with low professional experience more likely believe that ensuring mainstreamed students and foreign students with insufficient Turkish skills to undergo education in general classes with other students will positively affect their academic performance and development of their social skills in social studies courses. Regarding teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy, a single item shows a significant difference according to the professional experience variable. Accordingly, teachers with low professional experience feel more comfortable working with students who have the potential to be excluded by society compared to other teachers.

According to the prior knowledge variable, two items differed significantly. While the personal perceptions of teachers, with prior knowledge about inclusive education, are expected to be more positive than others, according to the findings, a significant difference exists only in two items and is directed towards only a single disadvantaged group. The participants, with prior knowledge of inclusive education, are more likely to think that the inclusion of students who have potential to be excluded from society (e.g. Roma and street children), traumatized children (e.g. due to disasters and violence), and children from separated families (e.g. those who live in a childcare home) in general

classes with non-disadvantaged students would improve their academic performance. Likewise, they are less likely to believe that having education with this group of disadvantaged students would not hinder the academic success of non-disadvantaged students.

There are significant differences in terms of classroom practices according to the variables of gender, professional experience, and education level. Compared to male teachers, female teachers are more likely to carry out different concurrent activities in their practices. In terms of professional experience variable, we find that teachers with 6-10 years of experience prefer the textbook less as a course resource. In addition, teachers with less professional experience use different resources and materials more frequently and as experience increases, the use of different resources and materials in every lesson decreases. Furthermore, it was found that both teachers with 0-5 years and 6-10 years of experience use relatively more small group work and different assessment methods in their practice compared to other teachers. Teachers with 6-10 years of experience seem more likely to perform different activities simultaneously. We can therefore, observe that as professional experience increases, the rate of implementation of these practices decreases.

Another important variable that affects the classroom practices of teachers is the level of education and according to the findings; there are significant differences in four questions. Compared to others, teachers with an undergraduate degree use more group work and different teaching and assessment methods simultaneously by taking into account students' levels. Furthermore, teachers with undergraduate degrees have higher rates of using different resources and materials concurrently compared to other groups of teachers.

#### *Teachers' Opinions on Barriers to Inclusive Education*

An open-ended question was asked of the participating teachers to provide their opinions on barriers to inclusive education. The results of the analysis of participants' responses regarding barriers to inclusive education are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Sources of barriers to inclusive education

Sources of Barriers	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Curriculum	142	36.41
Social structure and politics	86	22.05
Physical, technological, and hardware	77	19.74
Education system	28	7.17
Teachers	27	6.92
Students	25	6.41
Administration	5	1.28
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100</b>

When Table 5 is examined, it can be seen that according to the participants, the biggest barrier to inclusive education in social studies stems from the curriculum, supported by 36.41 percent of the participants. Taking into account the sub-categories of barriers expressed by the participants about the curriculum, the most frequently mentioned limitation was the number of weekly class hours allocated to the social studies course (45.77%). 30.98 percent of the participants stated the intense content of the social studies curriculum creates another limitation, which is directly linked to the number of hours allocated to social studies classes. In addition, a significant number of participants stated that the social studies curriculum is not inclusive (24.4%).

The participants who saw social structure and politics as the main barrier to inclusive education cited three main obstacles. 40.69 percent of them believe that the most important problem in this context is attitudes and behaviours observed in society such as intolerance, prejudices, and disrespect for differences. While 25.58 percent of them consider family attitudes and behaviours as an obstacle, 19.76 percent expressed problems stemming from cultural and linguistic differences. Other barriers expressed under this category are political views, ideologies, and problems arising from wrong policies.

In terms of physical, technological, and hardware barriers, the most frequently expressed problem is that the classes are crowded (38.96%). This is often seen as a barrier because crowded classes prevent effective communication with disadvantaged students. In the context of this category, 32.46 percent of the participants pointed out that the physical conditions of schools are not suitable for disadvantaged groups, particularly students with disabilities. 28.57 percent of the respondents stated that teaching materials and technology available in schools are insufficient for inclusive education practices.

Almost a third (32.14%) of the participants, who think that there are barriers to inclusive education in the education system, believe that the main problem stems from the policy of mainstreaming children with disabilities. Given that mainstreamed children are required to attend general schools as a principle of inclusive understanding, it can be inferred that this group of participants is reluctant to admit the general philosophy of inclusive education.

In this context, the alternative interventions most frequently mentioned by the participants are separate support services or part-time mainstreamed education of these children. The second most common problem mentioned about the education system concerns traditional education practices, supported by 28.57 percent of the participants. This is followed by the assessment of students with the same (i.e. standard) examination and measurement criteria, and hence, an anxiety of examination and success that develops both among students and teachers (21.42%). According to the participants, other barriers encountered in this area are insufficient support and counselling services and the fact that students with language and cultural differences do not receive instruction in their language in separate classes.

According to the participants, negative attitudes and behaviours towards disadvantaged students (51.85%) are the main obstacles to inclusive education by teachers. Another important issue mentioned in this context is that the training provided to teachers, both in pre-service and in-service programs, is incomplete and inadequate (37.03%). Some of the participants felt that other barriers concerning teachers included the lack of specialization in inclusive education practices and lack of self-reflection on the part of teachers.

The most important problem (56%) that the participants expressed regarding the obstacles created by students is their attitudes towards separating and excluding their peers on social, cultural, and economic grounds. 24 percent of the participants in this group associated the negative attitudes and behaviours of the students towards their disadvantaged friends with general attitudes of families. In this context, the importance of awareness training for families is emphasized. In addition, some participants expressed the inadequacy of the socio-economic conditions of the students as a factor.

Only five participants indicated that there are barriers to inclusive education caused by school administration and management. In particular, these participants stated that school administrators might be biased against disadvantaged students; as a result, they show negative attitudes and behaviours towards these children and do not provide adequate administrative support to teachers.

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Suggestions**

Although inclusive education has come forward in the educational agendas of various countries and the study and recommendations of international institutions in recent years, the findings obtained in this study show that social studies teachers in Turkey do not have sufficient information on the concept. It was found that only about 9 percent of the participants defined the concept sufficiently. Similar negativity manifests itself in participants' opinions about inclusive education. It was found out that a significant portion of the teachers participating in the study did not positively approach the idea of mainstreamed students and students whose Turkish is not sufficient to attend general schools. However, when one considers that inclusive education practices around the world are supported, in particular for children with disabilities to attend general schools rather than special education schools (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2007), it turns out that the participants do not adopt this current practice in the



world sufficiently. However, they usually have such an idea for the first two groups of disadvantaged students and they are usually more sympathetic for the third group of students (i.e. students with the potential to be excluded by society, traumatized children, and children from separated families) to have education in general classes together with non-disadvantaged students.

Furthermore, the majority of the participants believe that inclusive education environments will contribute to the academic success and development of social skills of both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged student groups, except for students whose Turkish language is not sufficient. Indeed, the inclusive learning approach creates significant gains for all students. In a study carried out by Lipsky and Gartner (1996), it was found that including both students with disabilities and without disabilities in general education institutions had a positive impact on the development of both academic achievement and social skills of students with disabilities. There is a positive correlation between the time students with disabilities spend in general schools and their academic success (e.g. higher grades) and development of social skills (e.g. less disruptive behaviour) (Hayes & Bulat, 2017). Likewise, numerous studies claim that children without disabilities achieve significant progress in terms of academic performance (i.e. higher test scores in maths and reading) (Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Cosier, Causton-Theoharis, & Theoharis, 2013), social development, and citizenship awareness (Diamond & Huang, 2005) in inclusive learning environments.

Despite the body of evidence for the inclusion of refugee children in general schools (Koehler & Schneider, 2019; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2015), only half of the participants believe that inclusion of foreign students whose Turkish language is not sufficient will have a positive contribution to the academic success and social skill development for both them and non-disadvantaged students. Similar results are also valid for other contexts. For example, in their study, Bešić, Paleczek, and Gasteiger-Klicpera (2020) analysed Austrians' attitudes towards inclusion in terms of the intersectionality of disability, refugee status, and gender and found that respondents showed relatively negative attitudes towards the inclusion of refugees and in particular refugee boys with disability into general primary schools. As the participants noted under the heading of "barriers", the most important reason for this attitude may be their own bias. Students' behavioural disorder and problems in school-family cooperation may be contributing to the formation of such a bias in teachers (Saritaş, Şahin, & Çatalbaş, 2016). In this context, as Banks (2008) stated, teachers, working in schools where children from different cultures and nationalities study together, should increase their knowledge and skill in multicultural education.

It was found that the participants have high perceptions of self-efficacy in meeting the needs of all but one disadvantaged group. The exempt group includes students whose Turkish language is not sufficient. Although a significant number of teachers feel empowered to meet the needs of mainstreamed students, they feel particularly inadequate in meeting the needs of students, whose Turkish skills (mostly Syrian nationality) are insufficient due to language and cultural differences. Güngör and Şenel (2018) and Yıldırım (2020) found that the most important concerns teachers have about Syrian students are the linguistic and cultural differences they face. These findings are also supported by the results of the TALIS survey conducted by the OECD in 2018. According to the results of the survey, teachers in Turkey mostly need professional development in the areas of "communication with people from different cultures and/or countries" (24.6%) and "teaching in multicultural and/or multilingual classrooms" (22.2%) (TEDMEM, 2019).

The findings of the study show that gender and professional experience are two important factors in the participants' perceptions of mainstreamed students. Female teachers and teachers with a low professional experience more likely believe that inclusive education practices will have a positive impact on the academic success and social skills of mainstreamed students in social studies. The same attitude was also manifested for students who have the potential to be socially excluded, and female teachers in particular have a more positive personal perception of this group of students. This may be because female teachers are generally viewed as more nurturing than male teachers (Darin Wood, 2012). Regarding professional experience, it was found that teachers with low professional experience

generally differ positively from other groups. It appears that the opinions of teachers with 10 years or more experience have changed significantly. The reason for this may be the desensitization and emotional exhaustion associated with the professional careers of teachers (Cemaloğlu & Erdemoğlu Şahin, 2007).

Inclusive education requires the implementation of a flexible learning system to meet the diverse and complex needs of each student and ensure their integration (Florian & Linklater, 2010). Inclusive education can be effectively reflected in-class learning and teaching processes through differentiated instruction, because, as stated by Tomlinson (2000, p. 2), it is “the efforts of teachers to respond to variance among learners in the classroom”. The majority of the participants stated that they had carried out differentiation at least once a week concerning the learning environment, teaching process, and teaching methods and techniques. However, these practices may not mean that an effective differentiation based on students' different abilities, interests, and levels (Tomlinson, 2007), was implemented because the results show that more than half of the participants use the textbook as basic course material. In differentiation instruction, resources developed with consideration of factors such as students' interest, level, and readiness should be used by teachers (Tomlinson, 2007).

The textbooks should be preferred as secondary sources because they are not constructed by taking into account the different characteristics and learning levels of each student, but with a standard understanding according to the objectives determined in the curriculum. Therefore, the fact that textbooks that are prepared according to the curriculum and are considered a significant obstacle to inclusive education by the majority of teachers are preferred as the main source for each lesson indicates that the resources and materials used in class are not sufficiently differentiated.

As Tomlinson (2007) pointed out, differentiated instruction also requires differentiating course activities and learning environments. However, according to the findings obtained in the study, the ratio of the participants rearranging classroom space and layout in every lesson was only 17.3%. The ratio of the participants using different methods and techniques and thus stating that activities were differentiated in every lesson was 46%. The relatively large difference between these two findings raises the question of whether differentiated instruction is effectively implemented in the classroom because differentiated instruction requires flexible structure in the organization of the classroom (Öztürk et al., 2017; Tiernan, Casserly, & Maguire, 2020). In other words, the lack of arrangements in the classroom space suggests that different methods and techniques that should be applied in differentiated instruction such as small group work, are not being used, or that these methods and techniques are used without the purpose of differentiation.

In the practice of inclusive education, the assessment criteria should not be the same for disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students. Rather, the assessment focuses on the progress students make individually in the process based on their level of development and readiness (Öztürk et al., 2017). The most important criterion in differentiated assessment is that the success of a student is determined by her/his performance between the start and end of the learning process against individually tailored goals (Lawrence-Brown 2004; Tomlinson, 2017). The findings obtained in the study indicate that the participants do not usually have a differentiated assessment practice as described here, because only 26.5 percent of them reported having implemented such a formative assessment in every lesson. In differentiated assessment, teachers must use tools such as portfolios, projects, and performance assignments to support student development and evaluate the education process (Ferguson, 2008; Öztürk et al., 2017; Tomlinson, 2007).

According to the findings obtained, the participants differ in terms of practice by the variables of professional experience and educational background. Teachers with low professional experience are more likely to use differentiated classroom practices such as differentiating resources and materials, perform different activities simultaneously, and perform small group work. Likewise, they simultaneously use different assessment methods compared to the participants with more professional experience. These results indicate, that, burnout increases with the years spent in the profession and,

thus, harms professional practices of teachers. While teachers with graduate degrees are expected to apply differentiated instruction more frequently in their classroom practices, it was found that teachers with undergraduate education are more successful at employing differentiated strategies. However, the fact that a relatively small number of participants with graduate degrees participated in the study may have caused this difference.

The participants described the most important barriers to inclusive education as related to the curriculum. In this context, the barriers to organizing the learning-teaching process with an inclusive understanding are expressed as the intensity of the curriculum, [in association with it] allocation of fewer class hours for social studies and the non-inclusive nature of the curriculum. Additionally, crowded classrooms were said to be a limiting factor in implementing differentiation practices for disadvantaged students. Indeed, given that inclusive education practices are activity-based and require cooperative learning (Öztürk et al., 2017), time, space, and the number of cohorts appears to be important factors in terms of the effectiveness of inclusive practices.

Some of the participants stated that another barrier to inclusive education is social prejudices and intolerance. Indeed, significant prejudice particularly towards the Syrian population under temporary protection can be observed in Turkey. In a study conducted by the Child Rights Protection Platform, it was found that 56 percent of the parents interviewed did not approve of their children being friends with a Syrian child (Education Reform Initiative [ERI], 2018). The discriminatory attitudes that have been brought to the agenda in the media in recent times are also indicative of a negative perception of the Syrian people.

For example, some mayors and city councils attempted to ban Syrian people from accessing public beaches in 2019 (Bianet, 2019). Such intolerance may be resulting from the fact that, although Turkey has become a target country for immigration in recent years, the concept of multiculturalism is not adequately addressed in educational programs and multiculturalism is still somehow a concept alien to the society. Additionally, when teachers do not embrace the fundamental goals of inclusive education, such as ensuring social integration and active participation of all in social life, cultural differences would be seen as an important barrier to inclusive education.

From this discussion, the importance of further interventions to increase teachers' awareness and knowledge about the philosophy and values of inclusive education, in general, was revealed. Given that teachers do not live in an isolated social environment independent of society, the interventions to be employed should be carried out in a way that sensitizes the entire society. Political institutions, especially MoNE, should organize campaigns to convey the purpose of inclusive education policies to teachers and the entire society correctly and effectively. Continuing professional development opportunities should be broadened, where participants can learn and experience differentiated teaching practices for all disadvantaged students in general, particularly foreign students whose Turkish is not sufficient. It will be much more beneficial to perform these interventions on a subject basis (e.g. maths and social studies teachers should be trained differently). In addition, the professional experience should be considered as an important context for teachers' practices, so professional development training should be designed with different contents depending on teachers with different professional experiences.

The understanding of inclusive education changes and expands over time depending on the needs and conditions of countries. Inclusive education, which has started to be frequently addressed in the education agenda, particularly after the arrival of Syrian refugees in Turkey, should be achieved through appropriate measures and interventions by also including other groups of disadvantaged students in the country. In this context, it would be beneficial to carry out similar studies in other subject areas (e.g. science, history) to uncover subject-specific problems and barriers. In addition, the same measurement tool can be repeated with similar groups to test the reliability of the current study. Additionally, a thorough examination of the issue with qualitative tools will help us to find better solutions to current problems.

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