

**INTERNATIONAL MULTI - DISCIPLINARY
CHILDREN'S STUDIES CONGRESS**

18 - 19 July 2021

Ankara / TURKEY

(THE PROCEEDINGS BOOK)



EDITED BY

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AUTHORS	UNIVERSITY/INSTITUTION	TOPIC TITLE
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ünal ŞİMŞEK	Aksaray Üniversitesi	SOSYAL BİLGİLER 4. SINIF ÖĞRETİM MÜFREDATINDA YER ALAN KAPSAYICI EĞİTİMLE İLİŞKİLİ KONULARIN TEKNOLOJİK DESTEKLİ UYGULAMALAR (WEB 2.0) KULLANILARAK ANLATILMASI: BİR ETKİNLİK ÖNERİSİ
Asst. Prof. Fatma KAHRAMAN GÜLOĞLU	Yalova University	AN INVESTIGATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHING UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM IN TURKEY IN TERMS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
Bibi Olvierra Paul & Dolianti Jaipol	Keningau Vocational College, Early Childhood Department & Keningau Vocational College, Early Childhood Department	THE EFFECTS OF HOPSCOTCH-INSPIRED ACTIVITY IN CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE NUMBERS IN ASCENDING AND DESCENDING ORDERS
Öğr. Gör. Zeynep YILMAZ	Şırnak Üniversitesi	OKUL ÖNCESİ DÖNEME YÖNELİK HAZIRLANAN AKILLI TAVŞAN MOMO ÇİZGİ FİLMİNİN DEĞERLER AÇISINDAN İNCELENMESİ
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AN INVESTIGATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHING UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM IN TURKEY IN TERMS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

Education is one of the determining elements of participation in social life. It plays an active role in obtaining the gains needed to achieve successful and sustainable employment and career. However, the situation is different when it comes to the education of children with disabilities. Their need to be educated with peers and in the least restrictive environment, rather than segregated schools or classrooms, is hampered by many deficiencies. Chief among these deficiencies is the lack of awareness and knowledge of teachers about the mainstreaming or inclusive education of children with disabilities. The aim of this study is to determine whether primary school teachers acquire sufficient knowledge and awareness about mainstreaming and/or inclusive education during their undergraduate education. In this study, I used the document analysis method. I examined curricula of primary school teaching departments at universities that randomly selected two universities from every seven regions of Turkey, Marmara Region, Mediterranean Region, Black Sea Region, Aegean Region, Central Anatolia Region, Eastern Anatolia Region, Southeastern Anatolia Region. I analyzed the secondary data through content analysis. In the study, it was determined that there was only one compulsory course under the names of special education and/or inclusive education, sometimes together and sometimes separately. There often are some elective courses too. As a result, the level of knowledge acquired by primary school teachers in undergraduate education is insufficient for the success of the mainstreaming and/or inclusive education. For the success of mainstreaming and/or inclusive education, it is necessary to carry out studies to increase the awareness and knowledge level of primary school teachers about children with disabilities' education in the least restrictive environment. In addition, it is necessary to update the course curricula of the primary school teacher candidates and add more compulsory courses about the subjects of children with disabilities, special education, coping with behavioral problems, and inclusive education, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder and learning disability to the curriculum separately.

Keywords: Children with disabilities, inclusive education, primary school teacher

INTRODUCTION

“... it is estimated that around 40 million (or just over one third) of the 115 million children currently out of school have disabilities, most of which are often neither visible nor simply diagnosed” (The World Bank, 2003 as cited in the EFA Flagship, 2004, p. 7). This is a number to be reckoned with and urgent measures must be taken to reduce it. Even if children with disabilities go to school, the rate of graduation from school is low (EFA Flagship, 2004). This ratio is also a ratio that should be increased.

Education has a vital role in participating in social life actively and productively. Studies have emphasized that this vital role of education is more meaningful and important for individuals with disabilities. For example, Engelbrecht, Kitching and Nel (2009) stated that education has a vital importance in the full participation of people with disabilities in social life and in benefiting from equal opportunities. Wright (2000) emphasized that education for individuals with disabilities is “the engine of power” (p. 2). Education is very important for disabled people to be self-sufficient and productive in social life and to achieve independence (T.C. Kalkınma Bakanlığı, 2015).

The importance of people with disabilities’ access to education and its meaning in integration with society are also included in international conventions, regulations, and studies. Barton and Armstrong (2011) expressed that those efforts are made to increase the inclusion of all children in normal education through international agreements and declarations. Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) (2008) is about the right to education of individuals with disabilities. It was stated here that the States parties should ensure the right to education of persons with disabilities based on equal opportunity, in a non-discriminatory and integrative manner, with a view to persons with disabilities at all levels and lifelong learning opportunities. UN Committee on the Rights of Child (2007) stated that children with disabilities have equal opportunities in education. For this, the diversity of children with disabilities should be accepted, their parents, teachers and other experts should work together on education. Children's abilities and skills should be supported, their development should be monitored, and peer support should be provided to strengthen their self-esteem. In addition, child-centered individualized education should be realized by providing full access to free primary and secondary education (para. 62-65). In the 2006-2015 Council of Europe Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities, it was emphasized that member states should promote unified education systems covering general and special education (Avrupa Konseyi Bakanlar Komitesi, 2006).

There are conceptual differences in expressing the education of children with disabilities. Hardman, Drew, and Egan (2006, p 58, 59) pointed out that there are three common conceptual expressions and practices regarding the education of students with disabilities. These are mainstreaming, the least restrictive education and inclusive education. Inclusive education is a tool for an inclusive society (Barton and Armstrong, 2011). Children with disabilities should be included in the general education system and supported individually (Avrupa Komisyonu, 2010).

So, how can an inclusive education be implemented? Pearson (2012, p. 17, 18) stated that there are three basic understandings in the inclusion of students with disabilities in normal education: 1) In a segregated classroom within the school providing normal education, 2) In an environment where opportunities are evaluated in mutual social interaction with the rest of the school, 3) Students with disabilities attend classes part-time or full-time with the rest of the school. In fact, Pearson's first understanding is based on segregated special education, but also partially includes mainstreaming education. The second understanding points to integrative education. The third understanding expresses the inclusive education understanding, which is the most up-to-date understanding in education.

In this study, I focus on the inclusive education, but, in Turkey, inclusive education is generally implemented in the form of mainstreaming education. However, inclusive education is a more encompassing and desirable education in mainstreaming education.

Mainstreaming in education is the physical placement of students with disabilities in the same school or classroom as students without disabilities. In mainstreaming, it is essential that students with special educational needs and non-disabled students study together (at least for part of the school day). However, in practice, students with disabilities do not receive adequate support within this system. Mainstreaming is outdated, but some still use it to describe the education of students with disabilities within the general education system (Hardman, Drew, and Egan, 2006, p. 59).

Davaki, Marzo, Narminio & Arvanitidou (2013) stated that the inclusion of students with disabilities in mainstream education systems is an important acceptance and emphasized that inclusive education is the most important tool to achieve this. Barton (1998) stated that inclusive education is related to the education of all children and pointed out that serious changes are necessary for such an education both in terms of society and its economic, social conditions and relations. Therefore, inclusive education is one of the main tools in the implementation of the inclusive education approach. "Inclusive education has positive effects not only for students with special needs, but also for other students, teachers and parents of students." (Tohum Türkiye Otizm Erken Tanı ve Eğitim Vakfı ve Eğitim Reformu Girişimi, n.d., p. 16).

Inclusive education is defined in the Decree Law No. 573 on Special Education as follows: "It is an educational environment developed to enable individuals who need special education to interact with other individuals and to achieve their educational goals at the highest level." (573 Sayılı Özel Eğitim Hakkında Kanun Hükmünde Kararname, 1997). Batu and Uysal (2015) stated that inclusion started to be implemented based on the understanding of integration. They stated that the most basic element of inclusion is the provision of support services and the placement of disabled students in regular classes. They drew attention to the importance of conducting such training on a "collaborative working principle" (p. 116, 119).

"Successful implementation of inclusion/integration requires a holistic approach and teamwork." (Güneş, Aktaş, Konuk & Şahsuvaroğlu, 2013, p. 193) and they listed the principles for the success of inclusive education as follows:

- Ensuring physical accessibility of schools for individuals with special education needs,
- Supporting teachers to implement inclusive education,
- Developing curricula in a way that facilitates inclusion/integration practices,
- All parties, school administrators, teachers, other staff, and families to change their attitudes towards individuals in need of special education in a positive way (Güneş et al. (2013).

For the success of inclusive education, school administration, classroom teachers and other personnel should accept students with special needs and support inclusive education. It is important that the classrooms and class materials meet the needs of inclusive education and that the class size is not large (25-30 students). Students without disabilities should be informed about inclusive education. It is necessary to support the classroom teacher with supportive special education inside or outside the classroom.

It is necessary to cooperate with the family of the student with a disability and ensure that the family is an active participant in the education of their children (T.C. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Eğitimi Araştırma ve Geliştirme Dairesi Başkanlığı [T.C. MEB EARGED], 2020a, p. 17-20). Many teachers provide inclusive education in their classrooms without adequate training. Lena (1998, as cited in UNICEF Innocenti Research Center, 2007, p 30) determined what teachers should do for a successful inclusive education as follows:

- Ability to assess students' strengths and needs.
- individualization of the teaching process to accommodate a broad range of abilities.
- The flexibility of adopting the topics in line with the interests and abilities of the students and ensuring the relevance of this work to the social and cultural context.
- Teamwork within and outside of school with professionals linked to other learning environments for reinforcement.
- Collaboration with parents.
- Using existing technologies to support learning and monitoring the success of applied approaches.

Inclusion education in Turkey is divided into three as full-time inclusion, resource room supported inclusion, and part-time inclusion. Apart from this, students have the opportunity to meet with their peers outside the classroom in special education classes in general schools (Tohum Türkiye Otizm Erken Tanı ve Eğitim Vakfı ve Eğitim Reformu Girişimi, n.d., p. 11). In the 2018/19 academic year, the number of students receiving inclusive education in primary school in Turkey was 115,556, and the number of students in special education classes was 25836. In 2019/20, the number of students receiving inclusive education was 119307, and the number of students in special education classes was 27337 (T.C. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı, 2018/'19; 2019/'20, p. 40). According to statistics, both the number of students studying in segregated special education classes in primary education and the number of mainstreaming students are increasing.

There may be several possible reasons for the increase in the number of students receiving education through inclusion/integration. These are:

“...the increase in the studies of the Ministry of National Education on inclusion/integration, the increase in the awareness of educational diagnosis and evaluation services by the public, the spread of guidance and research centers, the expenditures in the field of special education being covered by the state, the increase in social responsibility projects for the disabled managed by local governments, non-governmental organizations, universities and the private sector” (Güneş et al., 2013, p. 195).

Method

In this study, I used the document analysis method. “Document analysis includes the analysis of written materials containing information about the case or cases aimed to be investigated” (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 189).

I examined curricula of primary school teaching departments at universities that I randomly selected two universities from every seven regions of Turkey. Content analysis was applied to the curricula accessed from the websites of two randomly selected universities from each region.

Thus, the course contents of the Basic Education Departments, Educational Faculties of Balıkesir University and Bursa Uludağ University from the Marmara Region; of Akdeniz University and Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University from Mediterranean Region; of Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University and Ordu University from Black Sea Region; of Ege University and Manisa Celal Bayar University from Aegean Region; of Erciyes University and Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University from Central Anatolia Region; of İnönü University and Fırat University from Eastern Anatolia Region; of Harran University and Siirt University from Southeastern Anatolia Region. The curricula subjected to content analysis in this study are the ones accessed from the websites of the relevant universities.

Results

Content analysis was conducted on the curricula of the classroom teaching departments of the education faculties of 14 universities in seven regions of Turkey. In this analysis, the following table was created by focusing on the courses related to students with disabilities or students with special education needs.

Table 1: Courses Given to Students with Disabilities and Special Education Needs in Classroom Teaching Undergraduate Curricula in Turkey

Region	University / Faculty / Department	Course Names and Purpose	Compulsory or Elective Course
Marmara Region	Balıkesir University / Naceti Bey Education Faculty / Department of Classroom teaching ("Balıkesir Üniversitesi", n.d.)	Special Education and Mainstreaming	Compulsory
		Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Elective
		Education of Hospitalized Children	Elective
		Inclusive Education	Elective
		Learning Disability	Elective
		Individualizing and Adapting Teaching	Elective
	Bursa Uludağ University / Faculty of Education / Department of Basic Education Department of Classroom Education ("Bursa Uludağ Üniversitesi", n.d.)	Special Education and Mainstreaming	Compulsory
		Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Elective
		Education of Hospitalized Children	Elective
		Inclusive Education	Elective
		Learning Disability	Elective
		Individualizing and Adapting Teaching	Elective

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Mediterranean Region	Akdeniz University / Faculty of Education / Department of Basic Education Department of Classroom Education ("Akdeniz Üniversitesi", n.d.)	Special Education and Mainstreaming	Compulsory
		Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Elective
		Education of Hospitalized Children	Elective
		Inclusive Education	Elective
		Learning Disability	Elective
		Individualizing and Adapting Teaching	Elective
	Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University / Faculty of Education / Department of Basic Education Department of Classroom Education "Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy Üniversitesi", n.d.)	Special Education and Mainstreaming	Compulsory
		Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Elective
		Education of Hospitalized Children	Elective
		Inclusive Education	Elective
		Learning Disability	Elective
		Individualizing and Adapting Teaching	Elective

Continuation of Table 1

Region	University / Faculty / Department	Course Names and Purpose	Compulsory or Elective Course
Black Sea Region	Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University / Faculty of Education / Department of Basic Education Department of Classroom Education ("Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi, n.d.)	Mainstreaming in Primary Education	-
		Special Education	-
	Ordu University / Faculty of Education / Department of Basic Education Department of Classroom Education ("Ordu Üniversitesi, n.d.)	Special Education and Mainstreaming	Compulsory
		Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Elective
		Inclusive Education	Elective
		Learning Disability	Elective
		Individualizing and Adapting Teaching	Elective
Aegean Region	Ege University / Faculty of Education / Department of Basic Education Department of Classroom Education ("Ege Üniversitesi", n.d.)	Special Education and Mainstreaming	Compulsory
		Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Elective
		Education of Hospitalized Children	Elective
		Inclusive Education	Elective
		Learning Disability	Elective
		Individualizing and Adapting Teaching	Elective
	Manisa Celal Bayar University / Faculty of Education / Department of Basic Education Department of Classroom Education ("Manisa Celal Bayar Üniversitesi", n.d.)	Special Education and Mainstreaming	Compulsory
		Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Elective
		Education of Hospitalized Children	Elective
		Inclusive Education	Elective
		Learning Disability	Elective
		Individualizing and Adapting Teaching	Elective

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Continuation of Table 1

Region	University / Faculty / Department	Course Names and Purpose	Compulsory or Elective Course
Central Anatolia Region	Erciyes University / Faculty of Education / Department of Basic Education Department of Classroom Education ("Erciyes Üniversitesi", n.d.)	Special Education	Compulsory
		Mainstreaming Education	Elective
	Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University / Faculty of Education / Department of Basic Education Department of Classroom Education ("Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Üniversitesi, n.d.)	Special Education and Mainstreaming	Compulsory
		Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Elective
		Education of Hospitalized Children	Elective
		Inclusive Education	Elective
		Learning Disability	Elective
		Individualizing and Adapting Teaching	Elective

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Eastern Anatolia Region	İnönü University / Faculty of Education / Department of Basic Education Department of Classroom Education ("İnönü Üniversitesi", n.d.)	Special Education and Mainstreaming	Compulsory
		Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Elective
		Education of Hospitalized Children	Elective
		Inclusive Education	Elective
		Learning Disability	Elective
		Individualizing and Adapting Teaching	Elective
	Fırat University / Faculty of Education / Department of Basic Education Department of Classroom Education ("Fırat Üniversitesi", n.d.)	Special Education and Mainstreaming	Compulsory
		Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Elective
		Education of Hospitalized Children	Elective
		Inclusive Education	Elective
		Learning Disability	Elective
		Individualizing and Adapting Teaching	Elective

Continuation of Table 1

Region	University / Faculty / Department	Course Names and Purpose	Compulsory or Elective Course
Southeastern Anatolia Region	Harran University / Faculty of Education / Department of Basic Education Department of Classroom Education (“Harran Üniversitesi”, n.d.)	Special Education and Mainstreaming	Compulsory
		Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Elective
		Education of Hospitalized Children	Elective
		Inclusive Education	Elective
		Learning Disability	Elective
		Individualizing and Adapting Teaching	Elective
	Siirt University / Faculty of Education / Department of Basic Education Department of Classroom Education (“Siirt Üniversitesi”, n.d.)	Special Education and Mainstreaming	Compulsory
		Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	Elective
		Education of Hospitalized Children	Elective
		Inclusive Education	Elective
		Learning Disability	Elective
		Individualizing and Adapting Teaching	Elective

When I interpret the data in the table above, I can say:

It has been determined that the curricula of the classroom teaching departments of 12 universities, which are Balıkesir University, Bursa Uludağ University, Akdeniz University, Ege University, Manisa Celal Bayar University, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, İnönü University, Fırat University, Harran University, Siirt University, Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University and Ordu University have the same one compulsory courses. 11 universities, which are Balıkesir University, Bursa Uludağ University, Akdeniz University, Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Ege University, Manisa Celal Bayar University, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, İnönü University, Fırat University, Harran University, Siirt University, have same five elective courses about students with disabilities and special education needs. The compulsory course is “Special Education and Mainstreaming”. Selective courses are “Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Education of Hospitalized Children, Inclusive Education, Learning Disability, Individualizing and Adapting Teaching”.

It has been also determined that the curricula of the classroom teaching departments of three universities have different courses about children with disabilities and special needs. Department of Classroom Education at Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University has two different courses, which are Mainstreaming in Primary Education and Special Education. It has not been determined whether the courses are optional or compulsory. Department of Classroom Education at Ordu University has one compulsory, which I stated above, and four elective courses, which are "Special Education and Mainstreaming". Selective courses are "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Inclusive Education, Learning Disability, Individualizing and Adapting Teaching". Department of Classroom Education at Erciyes University has one compulsory course, Special Education Course, and one elective course, Mainstreaming Education.

Similar data were obtained in other previous studies as well. The majority of school administrators and teachers have not received training on mainstreaming education. For this reason, they do not have enough information about mainstreaming education (Güneş et al., 2013). Öztürk and Giren (2014, p. 23) stated that a course called "Special Education" is taught in the 3rd grade in preschool teaching departments in Turkey, but this course alone is not sufficient to train teachers who can meet the needs of children with special needs. In the "Effective Services for Persons with Disabilities Working Group Report" (T.C. Kalkınma Bakanlığı, 2015) it was stated that "the quality and awareness level of all teachers should be increased" (p. 66).

In Turkey, in the classroom teaching departments of education faculties of many universities, information on the special education of students with disabilities is taught under the title of "special education". However, it is thought that keeping disabled students different from other students under the name of special education, as if this course would make it easier for a classroom teacher to notice the disabled student and direct him/her to special education accordingly.

Mainstreaming education has many positive features for all parties. In the study carried out by T.C. MEB EARGED (2010b, s. 100), 68.2% of teachers working in special education schools and 57.7% of parents of students stated that inclusive education is positive.

Positive attitudes are very effective in the success of inclusive education. It is an important component of inclusive education that mainstreaming classroom teachers accept students with disabilities and have a positive attitude (T.C. MEB EARGED, 2010a). The positive attitude of the teacher towards inclusive education ensures that the attitudes of the other students in the class are also positive (Tohum Türkiye Otizm Erken Tanı ve Eğitim Vakfı ve Eğitim Reformu Girişimi, n.d., p. 14). For these reasons, it is necessary to educate all educators about the process in order to change the negative attitudes towards mainstreaming education (Güneş et al., 2013).

Teachers should be supported with support education, which is an important component of mainstreaming/integration education. Teachers are helpless in the face of the problems experienced in the classroom due to the scarcity of support education services. In order to solve the problem, itinerant teacher practice, counseling and assistant teaching practices should be implemented (Güneş et al., 2013).

During inclusive education, both students with disabilities and their teachers should be given special education support inside and outside the classroom (Tohum Türkiye Otizm Erken Tanı ve Eğitim Vakfı ve Eğitim Reformu Girişimi, n.d., p. 12). However, the support services provided at school to students receiving inclusive education are not sufficient. Nearly two-thirds of teachers lack support for inclusive education (T.C. MEB EARGED, 2010a, p. 108, 109).

Regarding inclusive education, teachers are respectively need the necessary information from experts in the subjects of "Preparing an individualized education program (IEP)" (60.7%), Behavior changing methods and techniques (51.9%), "Preparing for inclusion before and during inclusion" (47.9%), "Graining social skills" (44.6%), "Implementing the curriculum" (43.4%) (T.C. MEB EARGED, 2010a, p. 106).

Individualized education programs are insufficient. Teachers apply the current curriculum (Güneş et al., 2013). So, Individualizing and Adapting Teaching, which is an elective course, must be made compulsory. Classroom teachers also stated that IEP is prepared for students who receive inclusive education, but "there is a time problem in practice because the class is crowded" (T.C. MEB EARGED, 2010a, p. 110).

Conclusion

Regardless of its name (inclusive, integrative, mainstreaming), inclusive educational environments are one of the most basic conditions for individuals with disabilities to enjoy their education rights equally with others.

In the legal texts addressing the right to education of persons with disabilities, it is stated that their access to quality education should be guaranteed with their non-disabled peers, in the least restrictive environments, with equal opportunity. In inclusive classrooms, students with disabilities can communicate actively with other students without disabilities, and therefore receive education in the least restrictive environment.

Inclusive education cannot be implemented adequately in Turkey, since primary education teachers do not have sufficient equipment, assistant teachers, and auxiliary tools and materials related to inclusive education. For this reason, students who have the capacity to benefit from inclusive education are often referred directly to segregated special education. There is an open door in this regard in the Special Education Regulation. Thus, students with special needs cannot sufficiently benefit from inclusive education, which should be a priority.

As a result, primary school teachers in Turkey during their undergraduate education do not have enough information about children with disabilities to receive education together children without disabilities. In order for children with disabilities to take lessons together children without disabilities in mainstream classrooms, primary school teacher candidates need to take more theoretical and practical courses on this subject. Particularly, "inclusive education, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder and learning disability" courses, which are taught as elective courses in most classroom teaching departments, should be taught as a compulsory course. Classroom teachers working in the field, whether they have mainstreaming students or not, should take these courses as in-service training via distance education.

For the success of inclusive education, it is necessary for all educators in schools to receive theoretical and practical training on mainstreaming, integrative and inclusive education. In particular, they should be supported in implementing and following an individualized education program.

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