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The comparison of early childhood special education system in Turkey with in Hungary, Italy and Romania

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Abstract

In this research early childhood special education services in Turkey were compared with special education services in Hungary, Romania and Italy. Document scanning method was used in this research. According to the findings equality in education is in the forefront in early childhood special education legislation of countries. In previous studies it was found that some studies were done such as Montessori in Italy, Portage and Little Steps Early Education Programme in Turkey, Special Need in the Classroom Project in Romania under favour of Salamanca Conference and in Hungary disabled children were found out by application of questionnaires in education conditions. In special education early childhood education systems Romania, Hungary and Italy use “inclusion” education system and in addition “integrated” education system is used in Hungary. In Turkey besides individualized education programme, inclusion system is used. In general despite the education system of these four countries are the same, they use inclusion herewith.

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1. Introduction

In early childhood special education is one of education services provided to families and their 0-6 year old children having growth deficiency or being under risk (Birkan, 2002). When families learn that their children have growth deficiency or development risk, they do not know what to do and feel sense of dense uncertainty about the diagnosis. In this situation which is rather difficult for them, parents should get emotional support. With early education programme they help to develop healthy interaction patterns between disabled and risky babies and other individuals of family by giving information to parents about the characteristics of children, their basic requirements,

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how they can communicate with them. With participation to early education programme, parents at the beginning realise and learn that they are the people who can create a lot of progress and change about the development of child and they learn to meet the requirements of a child (Peterson, 1987; Gilmore, 2014).

Although many education opportunities are provided for school-age disabled children, the studies done especially for 0-3 age group children are scarcely any (Ysseldyke, Algozzine & Thurlow, 2000). The children require for special education are needed to socialize like normally developed children and have to identify their place in society (Sahin, 2010). Pre-school programmes in order to support developmental fields especially from unfavourable conditions, provide children important gainings in these developmental fields (Bronfenbrenner, 1974; Kagitcibasi, Sunar and Bekman, 2001). Pre-school education can be defined as all experiences involving childhood years starting from birth to starting primary school (Turan, 2004). In pre-school education classes, besides disabled ones there are children that are not accepted by their compeers because of their inabilities of social interactions. Without effective applications and supports, it is known that they will be faced with serious problems in the following years (Craig-Unkefer and Kaiser, 2002; McCabe, Hernandez, Luz Lara and Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Poyraz Tuy, 1999). The important period in early education for children having developmental deficiency is experienced in placing in pre-school inclusion setting. In this period the child is provided to be integrated to preschool (Chandler, 1993). In order to avoid the period until school term as loss in terms of children having special demands, some special regulations are needed (Varlier, 2004). The importance of inclusion done in preschool period is major in terms of fastening development and gaining basic communication abilities necessary for child to ease accordance to society in the following years (Gampel Gottlieb and Harrison, 1974). Although the families of children needed special demands are generally seen to support inclusion programmes, they worry about if these programmes can compensates social acceptance, security and education requirements of their children (Metin, 2000; Raborife & Phasha, 2010; Mokobane, 2011).

Early education and preschool education services for children needed special demand carry great importance. If these services are benefitted earlier, it will be possible to fasten development of child in every developmental fields, prevent his disability turns out to be an obstacle so increase his percentage to benefit from usual educational environment and with this early education reduce the emotional and social problems of family having a disabled child (Kırcaali-Iftar, 2000). When special education applications in early childhood is examined, there are different environments both in Turkey and in developed countries which students needed special care can take education from. These environments range from the least restrictor to the most restrictor. As the characteristics of child are taken as a basis, it is necessary for a child to place himself to the least restrictor environment (Salend, 2008). According to European countries, special education services show difference (Teknolojileri, B. Politikaları Özel İhtisas Komisyonu Raporu, 2001).

In this research, special education services in early childhood in Turkey, Italy, Romania and Hungary will be compared. Accordingly it was aimed to reveal similarities and differences of special education services in early childhood.

2. Aim

In this study it was aimed to reach new approaches in special education services considering the findings of studies done in Italy, Hungary, Romania and Turkey regarding early childhood special education services and enlighten researchers that will study on this subject in the future.

In the direction of this aim, the answers of the questions below were researched.

- How is the legislation regarding early childhood special education services in Turkey, Italy, Romania and Hungary?
- How is the applications are regarding early childhood special education services in Turkey, Italy, Romania and Hungary?
- What services are using the early childhood special education in Turkey, Italy, Romania and Hungary?
- How are The early childhood special education services in Turkey, Italy, Romania and Hungary?

3. Method

Document scanning method was used in this research. Regarding with the subject with the key words such as special education and early childhood was scanned in national and international searching indexes such as Google Academic, Ulakbim, YOK data base, Science direct and Ebsco. The documents of early childhood special education published by European Education Data Net (EURYDICE), the Ministry of Education (MEB) and Turkish Special Education Service Regulations, were scanned.

4. Findings

Table 1. The special education services in early childhood within countries

| Countries | Legislation |
|-----------|--|
| Turkey | Started in 1997 with “Executive Order of Special Education” number 573 |
| Italy | “National Law” was enacted in 1971 |
| Romania | A new Romanian law was acted in 1995 regarding “inclusion of these children to public schools” |
| Hungary | In 1993 “Public Education Act” law was enabled |

Development of early childhood special education legally started in Turkey with “Executive Order of Special Education” number 573 that was acted in 1997. In Turkey with executive order number 573 it was said that “The education of individuals needed special education, is conducted by using available methods and techniques in the direction of prepared individual education plans in every kind and level of schools and institutions with their peers” (MEB, 2000). With this idea, it was aimed to place children needed to have special education to usual classes and to create a new formation for social interaction (Harrist, Zaia, Bates, Dodge and Pettit, 1997; Johnson and Johnson, 1989; Westwood, 1993; Avcioğlu, 2005).

In Italy in 1971, 118 children needed to have special education were provided to get the same education with other children and again with item number 517 of the same law it was decided to be more than 2 children needed to have special education in classes of 20 students. Also with this law the students having low income were provided to participate education and society by equalising them with other children. Accordingly the children needed to have special education are helped to develop their characters. The working of teachers with management and families are also within legislation.

In Romania from 1995 a new law involving “inclusion of these children to standardized schools” was enacted to education law. Under favour of this law it became easy to include these disabled children to standardized schools. In 2001 18.000 disabled children were transferred to standardized schools from special education schools. By courtesy of inclusion and integrated programmes Romania got over much in educating teachers and directing disabled children to standardized schools (Vrasmas & Vrasmas, 2007)

In Hungary in 1993 Public Education Law was enacted. Later in 1998 equal rights law was enacted for all disabled people. It formed the legal basis of political changes in this field. All disabled individuals have the right of education. All parents have a right to choose schools. According to equal rights disabled children can go usual education or special education schools. For the ones demanding special education, professional rehabilitate centres decide whether the child is disabled or not (Csanyi, 2001).

Table 2. The studies regarding early childhood special education within countries

| Countries | Studies |
|-----------|--|
| Turkey | • Portage and Little Steps Early Education Programme |
| Italy | • Montessori |
| Romania | • “Special Needs in the Classroom” Project with UNICEF • Salamanca Conference |
| Hungary | • Questionnaire for children age of 6-15 having pre-school education |

In Turkey Portage and Little Steps Early Education Programme is used in studies regarding early childhood

special education (Pinar, 2006). In contents of both programmes there are studies supporting social development. Besides social supporting activities done by following these programmes, teaching social abilities which those children are ineffective compared to their peers, should be aimed. Identifying which social abilities are mentally disabled individuals are ineffective, is thought to be a guide in preparing the contents of early education programmes and forming prevention plans regarding inabilities (Aykir & Tekinarslan, 2012).

Maria Montessori was the first woman having medicine degree as well as making contributions to early childhood special education. Since she frequently met in hospital she was working, she focused on education of mentally disabled children. She suggested early intervention to these children is more important than medical intervention. The education method based on activity that was developed by Montessori and got successful results, is still used in many pre-school institutions and the basis of this system is encountered (Gargiulo & Kilgo, 1999).

The advancement in Romania was the Project “Special Needs in the Classroom” held by Ministry of Education with UNICEF in 1993. The aim of the Project is to increase the education of teachers, intern teachers and inspectors in efficiency in education of disabled children. On the other hand with Salamanca Conference in 1994, 2 main projects were done. After 1995 a new law involving “inclusion of these children to standardized schools” was enacted to education law. Under favour of this law it became easy to incule these disabled children to standardized schools. In 2001 18.000 diabled children were transferred to standardized schools from special education schools. By courtesy of inclusion and integrated programmes Romania got over much in educating teachers and directing disabled children to standardized schools (UNIFEC UNESCO, 1994; Tabatabaie & Manuchehr, 2012; Lozic, 2014).

In Hungary in 449 educational condition 128.043 child questionnaire were applied and 3.732 disabled children were reported (3% of the number). The aim of this was to obtain the situation in specific regions (Csanyi, 2001).

Table 3. Early childhood system in special education within countries

| Turkey | Romania | Hungary | Italy |
|---------------|--|---|---|
| BEP+Inclusion | From Integrated education system to Inclusion system | Integrated and Inclusion education system is used | Given importance to “sostegno” in Inclusion education system |

According to regulations in Turkey, after evaluation and recognition of a child starting school in real and multiway, Individualized Education Plan is prepared if he has difficulty due to disability (Sari, 2002). In Turkey in early childhood the population of special education classes consists of maximum 10 students. However in special education classes for autistic children consist of maximum 4 students. The protective precautions and regulations towards their social accordance in lesson, lunch and other activity hours with their peers are taken by institution. In these schools and institutions the children of special education classes are provided to do lessons and social activities with their healthy peers. Also in these schools and institutions education rooms are opened to give support to both disabled and genius children that are educating with their healthy peers in the same class, by providing special educational materials (Hizmetleri, M. E. B. O. E. Yonetmeligi, 2012).

Also in education of mentally disabled children, Portage and Little Steps Early Education Programme is used (Pinar, 2006). After 1995 in Romania there was a movement from “integrated” point of view to “inclusion”. By the help of “inclusion” education a differentiated in other words individual programme is offered for the education of disabled children. A support is given to teachers about this subject as well. The most important duty of a teacher during special education service in Romania is to spend more time with students as their friend (EURYDICE, CEDEFOP and ELF, 2009/10).

As in Romania, Hungary also uses “integrated” and “inclusion” education system. The teachers are well educated for these systems. Education is student oriented, differentiated and individualized. The motto is “Every child is important for us.” According to the new system in Hungary, it was aimed to decrease the number of graded schools. Accordingly it was aimed to educate students demanding special need in standardized schools. Also with inclusion efforts there formed strong ties between schools and families. The duty of special education teachers is rather important in forming this tie. The teachers have duty of forming social relations within class, giving student-oriented education and performing duplex communication. Also it should be necessary for all special education teachers and workers behaving together (Hamori-Vaczy, 2008).

In early childhood special education Italy uses “inclusion” education system. What Italy gives importance in inclusion system is “sostegno” which means supportive teacher. The duty of sostegno is to help teacher in class about children demanding special education. The teachers in Italy supports inclusion education system and they think classes are families for them (Ferri, 2008).

5. Result

This study is in a quality to enlighten early childhood special education issue in some chosen countries. In this study it was examined that how early childhood special education legislation, studies and services are in Romania, Hungary, Italy and Turkey.

When special education legislation of Romania, Hungary, Italy and Turkey were examined, some similarities came out. First of all equality in education is in the forefront in these four countries. By favour of equality children demanding special education were provided to be educated with their peers in standardized schools.

Also some studies were done in Romania, Hungary, Italy and Turkey for children demanding special education in early childhood. In Turkey Portage and Little Steps Early Education Programme is used in studies regarding early childhood special education. In contents of both programmes there are studies supporting social development. Besides social supporting activities done by following these programmes, teaching social abilities which those children are ineffective compared to their peers, is aimed. With favour of these programmes, important developments achieved in both families and children as well as gaining family guidances a profession.

With Special Need in Classroom Project held with UNICEF Romania aims to increase the education of teachers, intern teachers and inspectors in efficiency in education of disabled children. Later with Salamanca Conference in 1994, 2 main projects were done. So in 2001 18.000 children demanding special education were transferred to standardized schools. By courtesy of these programmes Romania got over much in educating teachers and directing disabled children to standardized schools. With achieving those kind of projects of Romania, it can be thought that every kind of difficulty can be overcome by a teacher profile. These projects in Romania contributes a lot in development of special education in early childhood within the country.

With questionnaire study done in Hungary, it was aimed to take out disabled children only in specific regions and 128.043 children were applied questionnaire. As a result 3.732 children were reported as disabled.

In Italy Maria Montessori focused on education of mentally disabled children. She took out activity based teaching methods as a result of her successful studies. Today these methods are still used in preschool institutions and the basis of this system is encountered.

Romania was using “integrated” education system. Later it passed to “inclusion” education system. In Hungary “integrated” and “inclusion” education systems are used. In Italy “sostegno” which means supportive teacher system is used in “inclusion” system. Romania, Hungary and Italy uses “inclusion” education system whereas Turkey uses individual education system and inclusion system. There are similarities in education systems of these countries. Only in Hungary there is “integrated” system and in Italy there is “sostegno” besides them.

As a result when early childhood special education systems of examined countries are compared there seen similarities in general apart from little differences.

6. Suggestions

- The education of individuals demanding special education, should be started from early childhood and the advanced countries in this issue should be taken as an example.
- The researches regarding special education in early childhood done in Turkey, Hungary, Romania and Italy should be increased and these special education services in this period should be given importance.
- The schools giving special education service should be always in contact with family and child.

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