

Original research article

# Examination of Special Education Teachers' Opinions on the Problems They Experience and the Solution of the Problems

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**Abstract:** In this study, the problems experienced by special education teachers according to their opinions, the source of the problems and their expectations were tried to be revealed. The research, which was conducted to identify the problems and expectations of special education teachers who work in the country and have an important place, is aimed to improve the quality of special education by developing solution proposals. Eight school administrators, who work in schools of various types and levels in Aydın province, who were determined by criterion sampling and maximum diversity sampling, which are among the purposeful sampling methods, participated in this study, which is considered in the case study design, which is one of the qualitative research methods. The semi-structured interview form used in the research was shaped by the researchers as a result of the literature review. The data obtained by the face-to-face interview method were analyzed by content analysis. As a result of the analysis of the data, it was determined that special education teachers mostly experienced problems with school management, teaching process, student parents, physical space and other field teachers. In this study, which is thought to make a significant contribution to increasing the quality of special education given in schools, within the framework of the data obtained, meeting the needs of teaching materials and equipment, providing seminars, courses and distance education services for parents, teachers and school administrators, and communication and communication of school administrators with other field teachers. Suggestions have been developed to carry out activities to increase interaction.

**Keywords:** special education, school administrator, teacher

## 1. Introduction

Education, given by determined people in a controlled environment, provides personal development and socialization, and is the most important phenomenon in the development of contemporary and civilization. Through education, the cultural heritage, knowledge and experience of societies are regularly transferred from generation to generation (Öztürk, 2001). At the same time, education is an important tool in eliminating inequality between individuals and providing equality of opportunity, as well as enabling individuals to realize their abilities and develop their personality (Adem, 1997). It is also stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that every individual has the right to education. In this direction, legal, administrative and educational arrangements have been tried to be made for the students who do not show normal development and who have special education needs to benefit from equal education opportunities. Special education can be called as activities and practices that include the education and training of individuals who are separated from their peers in terms of body, social development, spirit and mind, and it is the regulation of educational variables in order to eliminate the deficiencies in the communication, academic and adaptation areas of individuals (Özsoy, Özyürek, & Eripek, 2000). In other words, special education can be expressed as all of the educational services that differ significantly from other students, increase the individual's ability to live independently and aim to increase individual capacity (Altınkurt, 2008). There are many students who have deficiencies in different fields and need special education.

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Individuals with special needs are separated from other classmates due to at least one characteristic. They may exhibit different performances in terms of mental characteristics, they may not have sensory problems or the skills that their peers have, and they may experience communicative problems in their relationships (Özyürek, 2008). According to the data of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), 12.29% of the individuals that make up the society have special needs (TÜİK, 2020). It is necessary to organize and implement different training programs for these individuals, who show a different development from their peers due to the difference in their different physical, mental and social developments that occur at birth or that occur later, and cannot be trained with a similar education (Kızır & Memişoğlu, 2017). The first target in the education of individuals in need of special education; to provide individuals with disabilities in different areas with independent living skills, to strengthen their ties to life and to facilitate their adaptation to social life (Çoşkun, Dündar, & Parlak, 2014; Tursun, 2019). For this purpose, special education practices differ considerably from formal and non-formal education in terms of method, content and organization of educational environments. The organization and development of educational practices and the ability to provide special education services to the desired extent are closely related to the teacher. It is extremely important for the teacher to know the characteristics and needs of the children, to create and implement an effective plan, to follow the developments in the field, to support and cooperate with the management in increasing the quality of education.

However, special education teachers may encounter different problems in the education and training process. There are domestic and foreign studies in the literature on the problems faced by special education teachers (Brownell & Smith, 1992; Çetin, 2004; Demir & Mustafa, 2009; Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Kilgore et al., 2003; Kodal, 2006; Kılıç, 2020; Saygın & Hamurcu, 2010; Stempien & Loeb, 2002).

In this sense, it is important to plan the special education services effectively and to reveal the current situation in order to improve their quality. In this study, it is aimed to determine the sources of problems experienced by special education teachers and to examine the solutions to these problems according to the views of the teachers. In this direction, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the problems special education teachers have with school management?
2. What are the problems experienced by special education teachers regarding the teaching process?
3. What are the problems that special education teachers have with their parents?
4. What are the problems experienced by special education teachers regarding physical space?
5. What are the problems that special education teachers have with other field teachers?
6. What are the solutions for the problems experienced by special education teachers?

## 2. Methods and materials

### 2.1. Research pattern

In this study, in which case study was preferred among the qualitative research designs, it was aimed to obtain data in the direction of teacher experiences by referring to the opinions of teachers about the problems faced by special education teachers. Case studies are an empirical research method that can be preferred in cases where current cases are studied in their own living spaces, the boundaries between the case and the content are not clear, and it is possible to gather information through multiple sources (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006).

A case study reveals results related to a certain situation by investigating one or more cases in depth. The factors related to a situation are investigated in a holistic way, focusing on how they affect the relevant situation and how they are affected, and the results of a situation set an example for understanding similar situations (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2006).

In case studies that focus on dynamic and multifaceted connections between human relations, events and other external factors (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2008), it is possible to gain deep insights into participants' perspectives when multiple data sources are used (Tellis, 1997). In this study, it has been determined as a case study, since it is a matter of examining and examining a situation in its real environment in detail (Creswell, 2021).

### 2.2. Working group

Purposive sampling method was preferred in this study, which aims to reveal the opinions of special education teachers about the problems they experience. With this method, it is aimed to examine information-rich situations in depth (Patton, 2018). In the study,

maximum variation and criterion sampling methods were used among the purposive sampling methods. While maximum diversity sampling is preferred in identifying and defining themes containing some differences and variations (Merriam, 2019); With the criterion sampling method, it is aimed to determine certain criteria and the people, events and situations that meet these criteria (Baltacı, 2018; Büyüköztürk, 2012).

The study group of the research consists of 10 teachers who voluntarily participated in the research working in Aydın in the 2022-2023 academic year. In order to ensure maximum diversity, teachers working in different schools were included in the research. The selection of the participants was made on a voluntary basis, and the criteria of being a special education teacher at the undergraduate level, having different gender and seniority, and having taught for at least 5 years were taken into consideration in the selection of the participants.

**Table 1. Participant Characteristics**

Code Name	Gender	Type of School	Employed Seniority	Educational Status
(K1)	Female	Kindergarden	6 years	Undergraduate
(K2)	Female	Primary School	8 years	Undergraduate
(K3)	Female	Primary School	10 years	Undergraduate
(K4)	Male	Secondary School	12 years	Undergraduate
(K5)	Male	Secondary School	10 years	Undergraduate
(K6)	Male	High School	14 years	Undergraduate
(K8)	Male	Secondary School	7 years	Undergraduate
(K9)	Male	Secondary School	10 years	Undergraduate
(K10)	Male	High School	12 years	Undergraduate

### 2.3. Data Collection Tools

In the study, the semi-structured interview form created by the researchers was used as a data collection tool. Semi-structured interviews are not as rigid as structured interviews and not as flexible as unstructured interviews, and data is tried to be obtained within the framework of the questions determined before they are conducted (Karasar, 1999). Thanks to the data obtained through interviews, people's experiences, opinions and thoughts on the subject, and attitudes are revealed (Baltacı, 2019).

A pilot study was carried out by taking expert opinion on the research questions prepared by conducting literature research, and the interview questions were revised and finalized.

The Opinions of Teachers to Identify the Problems Special Education Teachers Experienced interview form consists of 10 questions together with the probe questions. Some of the questions in the Interview form of Teachers' Opinions on Identifying the Problems Experienced by Special Education Teachers used in the study are as follows:

1. What does special education mean to you? Can you explain?
2. How can the applications used in special education processes be made more effective?

### 2.4. Data Collection and Analysis

The data used in the study were collected by the researchers in the 2022-2023 academic year. The data obtained as a result of face-to-face interviews with the participants, which lasted approximately 45 minutes, were transferred to Excel and made ready for analysis. Content analysis was preferred in the analysis of the data, and themes and categories were created. The opinions of three faculty members who are experts in the field of educational sciences were sought, and as a result of the analysis of the data obtained as a result of the interview, 5 themes and 14 categories were determined. The categories created were expressed as tables and the opinions of the participants were presented in the form of quotations.

The use of qualitative research in special education has an important place in determining the opinions and thoughts of the people involved in this process (Brantlinger et al., 2005).

It is important to determine the problems encountered in special education from different perspectives of personal views, to understand the problems more accurately and to develop solution proposals. The data obtained from the 10 participants were evaluated according to the content analysis and the problems and suggestions that the teachers encountered at the educational, institutional and family level were included.

### 2.5. Credibility, Transferability, Consistency and Confirmability of Research

In order to ensure validity in qualitative research, long-term participation and observation of the researcher, member control, rich description and diversification; In order to ensure reliability, the strategies of the researcher to express himself, his place and position clearly and to define the qualifications of the participants are applied (Creswell, 2021; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021).

In this direction, multiple data sources such as individual interviews, document analysis and observation were used to ensure internal validity and consistency in this study, and detailed descriptions were made by obtaining confirmation of the data obtained from the participants. In addition, every stage of the study was explained in detail, expert opinion was sought at many points, data analyzes were made and interpreted separately, the quality of the study was tried to be increased, and due care was taken to be unbiased, consistent and objective.

### 2.6. The Role of Researchers

Before moving on to qualitative research, the position of the researcher, attitudes, tendencies, experiences, opinions or prejudices that are likely to affect the research are expressed (Creswell, 2021). While one of the researchers involved in this study is an experienced and expert lecturer who has supervised many projects and thesis, the other researcher is a teacher and doctoral student. The fact that the study is carried out under the control of an experienced instructor contributes to the increase in the quality of the study.

## 3. Results

In this part of the study, the findings and comments obtained from the research are included. Comments with similar expressions and problems were grouped together.

**Table 2. Problems faced by Special Education Teachers**

Themes	Categories	f
School Management	Management indifference	7
	Manager inexperience	
	Staff shortage	
Teaching Process	Lack of material	6
	Lack of material support	
	Curriculum	
Parent behavior	High expectation from teacher	6
	Parent's disapproval	
	economic interest	
Physical Space	Hardware Insufficient	5
	Space limitation	
Other teacher behavior	Colleagues' lack of understanding	4
	Not wanting to teach these students	
	Non-interaction	
Total		28

When the answers of the participants were analyzed, it was determined that special education teachers had problems in five different categories: school management, teaching process, physical space, parents and other teacher behaviors. It is seen that special education teachers mostly encounter problems related to school management, teaching process and parent behavior. These problems are followed by problems related to physical space and the behavior of other teachers.

### 3.1. Problems with School Management

When the answers of the special education teachers are examined, the problems related to the school management are in the first place. Special education teachers, especially the school administration, do not have knowledge and experience in this field, they ignore the problems, their needs are either not met at all or are constantly postponed, they experience more problems especially in schools that receive education with other school levels because the school administration's students at other levels and their needs are met. stated that they care more. Regarding this, one participant stated that *"The administration does not know what special education is, does not understand but does not want to understand it, there is this unit in the school, but they are detached from everything else (K7)"*, while another said, *"Our deficiencies are not remedied,*

although we express our deficiencies, the administration is constantly saying "What is it? While another said, "The administration behaves very passively, we see us and our students as third class citizens, we are constantly ignored (K1)". In addition, they stated that the school administration exhibited passive behaviors regarding the student shuttles and this situation negatively affected them and increased the burden on them. Regarding this, one participant said, "The school administration needs to have a little dominance over the bus, there is no auxiliary staff, even loading and unloading is looking at us (K2)", while the other participant said, "The ones who run the bus, the bus drivers don't even know how to behave towards the children, anyway, for different reasons. Because of this, it changes frequently (K3)" while another said, "Support staff may be required in the classrooms, in some cases we call the parents when they are not available. The administration is not satisfied with this situation, but it is said in different ways (K4)". Another participant stated that "People who will be appointed as administrators in special education schools should either graduate from these schools or receive in-service training on this subject (K8)".

### 3.2. Problems with the Teaching Process

When the answers of the participants are examined, the problems they experience in the teaching process come second among the problems they voiced. Chief among these is the problem of lack of curriculum and materials. Almost all of the participants stated that they had problems especially about the lack of materials. Regarding this, one participant said, "The lack of material is a serious problem, I buy it myself and do it myself, I have no other choice (K2)", while another participant said, "There is a little material that I can use in the classroom, but it is not at all suitable for the level of the student and the incoming It is not suitable for some students (K5)", while another said, "The curriculum they want us to apply is not suitable for the structure of the child, there are such students that it is not even possible to apply it, the curriculum should be made suitable for individuals or grouped differently (K6)". On the other hand, they stated that "Student level is very insufficient, there is no printer even if we want to take a print out to give to the student (K4)".

Another participant said, "Our students are treated as normal students, celebration programs are sent for certain days and weeks, that is, it is not possible to get them done, to be able to keep them there and "When I come home from school, I try to design materials for students (K3)" he stated.

### 3.3. Problems with Student Parents

When the answers of the participants to the problems they encounter with the parents of the students are examined, it is seen that the parents generally do not have any idea about their children's ailments or conditions, and some of them do not accept and do not want to accept it, they have great expectations

from the teacher, but when they return home, the old behaviors are continued instead of the implementation of the things they want to be implemented. They stated that they always come to school by making excuses for the children and the children, and this situation negatively affects and hinders the education that is intended to be given to the children. Regarding this, one participant said, "We tell about the child's situation, he does not want to accept it so much that he takes the child to different courses or activities outside of school, forcing the child and himself, and then accusing us of inadequacy (K3)", another said, "It is as if the teacher has a magic stick in his hand, they think we will create miracles, we receive instructions to get this and that done, but when we ask them to have it done again at home, we are left empty-handed, the parent does not want to disturb their comfort (K2)", and another says, "The parent comes to school all the time, he says I can't leave my child. - There is no education, there is no sanction, or it cannot be applied (K6)". Some teachers even stated that some parents ensure that their children stay in special education in order not to send their children to the military or to lose the salary received from the state.

In addition, one participant said, "The evaluation of the child should not be left to the parents, the parent may act emotionally or consider different interests, some parents see their child as an additional source of money, especially if the economic situation is bad, we say that the child can continue normal education, no, it is better, otherwise, (K8)". Another says, "I don't want him to go to the military, I will do it if that's the way (K5)", while another says, "The education we give at school needs to be continued at home as well, but because it's easy for parents, they read what they know (K10)", and another says, "Almost every day, there are parents who say, "Let their children do this and that, (K1)".

### 3.4. Problems With Physical Space

When the answers given by the participants to the problems they encounter about the physical space are examined, they stated that instead of designing buildings and classrooms according to the situation and needs of the students, they were directed to classes that were created later or that did not respond to the requirements on the grounds that they were empty.

Regarding this, one participant said, "The classes that the children direct us to, keeping all of them together, do not meet the needs and may even become dangerous for some children. Unfortunately, there is

*nothing protective for the children (K4)*”, while the other participant said, *“There is not enough cleaning in the classrooms due to the lack of personnel. Since the heater is not provided, the classrooms are very cold, which causes the children to be sick all the time (K3)”*. Another participant said, *“We are trying to teach in multi-storey schools, but some children have a tendency to jump and some have a tendency to self-harm, although there is not much present, there is a risk, some of them hit the walls of the classroom, they hold us responsible if something happens. It would be much better if it was designed, because it was done without thinking in the classrooms in the past (K1)”*, while another said, *“Personal care areas are quite inadequate, there must be a sink, toilet, kitchen in order to gain some behaviors, “In my classroom they tried to set up an area later on, but it was a makeshift thing (K5)”*.

### 3.4. Issues with other subject teachers

Finally, under this heading, the teachers mentioned the problems they had with the other teacher due to the fact that two teachers were assigned in the classrooms. Also, when they gave education in the same building with other schools, the branch teachers did not want to teach these classes, they did not take care of these students during their shifts, they reacted more harshly to these students compared to their own students. They stated that they were more distant from themselves.

Regarding this problem, one participant said, *“We are also the teachers of this school, they also do not act with understanding. The duty teacher should also take care of our students, but they call us by sending students, and our students can be treated more harshly even if they behave the same as the others (K6)”*, while another said, *“Teachers do not want to attend classes such as painting and music that would be very beneficial for students to take, some of them have very prejudices and the administration does not do anything (K5)”*. Another participant said, *“Some teachers at school do not know us or do not they behave like that, they do not want to communicate much (K2)”* and another stated that *“They do not invite us to their activities, there is a coldness and disconnection (K9)”*.

### 3.5. Solution Suggestions for Special Education Teachers’ Problems

Special education teachers stated that they have problems with school management, teaching process, physical space, parents and other field teachers, and that these problems are more common in some institutions depending on the conditions. They emphasized that even if some of the problems encountered cannot be eliminated, reducing them will increase their motivation and commitment to the school and contribute to more effective teaching.

Regarding this, a participant said, *“Parents, teachers in other fields, and school administrators do not have the slightest knowledge of special education, training should be given to the people involved in this regard, this both contributes to the development of a common understanding and acts more consciously, Parents can also accept their child as they are (K1)”*, while another said, *“The administration should be more active and make efforts to develop cooperation with other teachers, organize joint activities for this purpose (K3)”*, another participant said, *“The lack of materials they need should be addressed. Another participant stated that the school management or national education should allocate more resources to this field in order to eliminate the problems, to provide material and equipment support suitable for the levels of the students at different developmental stages, and to redesign the classrooms considering the situation of the students (K4)”*, another participant said; *“Evaluation of children should not be left to the parents, therefore this evaluation should be done with the joint decision of the Guidance Research, the school principal and the teacher, therefore the system should be rearranged to include them (K6)”*; while another said, *“Breaking the prejudice and negative perspective towards special education students. They stated that an information meeting can be held within the schools for this purpose (K2)”*.

In addition, one participant said, *“If school administrators come from different fields, they must definitely receive in-service training and the condition of having actually worked in special education for administrators (K9)”*, said, *“School administrators should organize especially informative trainings for parents, for this, guidance teachers should be given more training. should assign more tasks and avoid cooperating with the necessary units if necessary (K8)”*, another participant stated, *“Technology, design and visual arts teachers should be able to be used more in schools with special education students (K10)”* and *“Additional fees or fees that will make it attractive for other teachers to teach. additional points can also be offered (K7)”*.

## 4. Discussion, Suggestions

Special education is the work carried out in a separate educational environment through a separate training program by the personnel trained for children with special needs. In other words, it is the training conducted to eliminate the deficiencies in the fields of academic, communication, movement and adaptation in individuals. Through special education,

educational aspects are tried to be organized by preventing, reducing or eliminating the behaviours that are seen as defective in individuals (Özsoy et al., 2000).

The main purpose of special education is to focus on the features that children can do and develop, rather than their differences, and to make them self-sufficient by gaining the necessary knowledge and skills (Diken, 2017).

The achievement of the desired goals of special education and the desired level of results are related to the realization of other elements as well as the teacher element. In this context, elements such as management, parents, and physical space elements are of great importance and the teacher can make and implement more effective plans in an environment where the necessary conditions are met. The problems faced by teachers working in special education differ from teachers working in formal and non-formal education schools due to student qualifications and differences. Various studies have been conducted on this subject, among them the problems that teachers encounter with family, administrators, system and system administrators (Ceyhun & Kaya, 2013; Karasu et al., 2013), job satisfaction of special education teachers by considering different variables. (Piştav Akmeşe, Kayhan, & Demir, 2013) and the problems experienced by special education teachers in classroom management, classroom communication and teaching skills were also encountered.

Identifying and eliminating the sources of problems that affect the effectiveness and work efficiency of special education teachers is important in terms of maximizing the potential of students and teachers.

It is known that special education teachers face various difficulties and problems throughout their professional lives, as they have to provide education to students who show less physical, social and cognitive developmental characteristics compared to their peers.

In this study, it has been determined that the main problem areas faced by special education teachers are related to school management, teaching process, physical space, parents and other field teachers. The solutions they put forward for these problems are generally to support special education teachers by providing the necessary resources, support and appreciation for their work, to be sensitive to their needs, to ensure continuous cooperation, communication and interaction between other field teachers, parents and relevant stakeholders and special education teachers. activities should be created to increase They also stated that students with similar characteristics should be placed in the same classes, so that they could more easily show each student the individual attention they need.

In the teaching process, it is necessary to eliminate the lack of materials they need, to provide material and equipment support suitable for the levels of students at different developmental stages, to allocate more resources to this field by the school administration or national education for this purpose, to redesign the classrooms considering the situation of the students, and to determine the quality of special education. stated that it would increase their commitment to their school.

When the opinions of the teachers participating in the research are examined, in order to eliminate or reduce the problems encountered;

- Seminars, courses and distance education services can be provided to parents, teachers and school administrators through different institutions, and their quantity and quality can be increased in order to facilitate access.

- The physical conditions, teaching materials and equipment needs of the classes where students with special educational needs are present should be met and necessary initiatives should be taken in this regard.

Qualified, informative, awareness-raising and guiding education should be given to families of students with special needs.

- Various activities can be organized to increase communication and interaction with school administrators and other field teachers.

- Teamwork can be encouraged by providing active communication and cooperation with other teachers, school management and parents.

- Connections with different professional communities can be established for special education teachers to share their experiences and exchange information with other colleagues.

In addition, providing professional development opportunities for special education teachers to continuously improve themselves, effectively cooperating with other teachers, administrators, parents and experts, keeping communication channels open, encouraging information sharing through regular meetings, e-mail communication or online platforms. Determining teaching strategies taking into account students' strengths and weaknesses, conducting regular assessments to monitor students' progress, providing support by the administration to teachers in matters such as classroom arrangement, allocating support staff, and necessary

physical arrangements, in other words, a responsive and inclusive environment of the school in general. It is also important to provide emotional support to teachers.

## 5. Conclusions

Special education practices differ considerably from formal and non-formal education in terms of method, content and organization of educational environments. The organization and development of educational practices and the ability to provide special education services to the desired extent are closely related to the teacher. In this study, which was carried out to determine the problems and expectations of special education teachers who work in our country and have an important place, it is aimed to increase the quality of special education by developing solution suggestions. Eight school administrators, who were determined by criterion sampling and maximum diversity sampling, which are among the purposive sampling methods working in schools of various types and levels in Aydın province, participated in this research, which was handled in the case study design, which is one of the qualitative research methods. The data obtained by face-to-face interview method were analyzed by content analysis. As a result of the analysis of the data, it was determined that special education teachers mostly had problems with school administration, teaching process, student parents, physical space and other field teachers. Identifying the problems of teachers participating in the research is important in terms of increasing the quality of special education and contributing to increasing interaction.

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