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Planning of Educational Services to be conducted in Support Education Classrooms

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Abstract: In primary schools, support classrooms have been established for students with special educational needs to receive support education in areas where they need it, while continuing their education in the same class with their peers. In these rooms, education is provided to students with disabilities and special talented students through inclusive/integration. Therefore, the design of the educational environment, educational programs and teaching plans need to be prepared in a more specific way. The education given in support classrooms is organized according to the student's individual education plan (IEP). In order to achieve the educational goals, set out in the plan, educational and support services should be planned according to the needs of the student. In this study, opinions and suggestions are given for the planning of the educational environment, the student, other stakeholders and the educational program in order to achieve the goals of individualized support education. In this context, a conceptual framework has been created on the structure, purpose, elements and planning of support education following a comprehensive literature review. It is thought that the study will guide educators and researchers who are interested in this area.

Keywords: Special education, Support education, Planning

Introduction

Considering individual differences, it is known that not every student can adapt to the same level of educational processes. In a classroom, there may be students with unequal socioeconomic status, academic achievement levels, and physical and mental development levels. These differences within the classroom can both advantage and disadvantage children. Especially, in order to ensure the integration of students with disabilities and students with special talents through inclusive education, education should be provided in specially designed environments by teachers who have special education knowledge and skills to support classroom education. Inclusive education aims to eliminate individual differences by educating individuals with and without special educational needs together in general education classrooms, to promote the acceptance of individuals with special educational needs by society, and to develop their self-confidence (Yıldız & Atamturk, 2024).

Support Education Room (SER) in primary schools are specialized educational environments created for students with special education needs to receive support education in areas where they require assistance while continuing their education in the same classroom with their non-disabled peers. In SERs, students with special education needs, as well as students with special talents, who continue their education in the same classroom with their non-disabled peers through inclusive education practices, can receive education.

Yazıcıoğlu (2022) collected teacher opinions on the functioning of support education rooms in primary schools. The study determined that SERs were not functional, schools lacked sufficient physical conditions for support education rooms, and there were non-regulatory different practices in the planning of educational services in SERs. However, the study found that school administrations supported the activities carried out in support education rooms. Yıldız and Atamturk (2024) stated in their study that teachers in SERs positively contribute to students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. Similarly, Duran and Celik (2021) evaluated parental views on support education rooms in their study. In this study, the views of parents of students

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attending support education rooms in primary schools regarding assessment practices were examined. The study highlighted that parents were satisfied with the assessment practices and believed that these practices supported students' learning.

According to the results of Datta's study (2015), teachers believe that support education services positively support students' problem-solving skills, moderately organize their social lives, and do not affect their family relationships. While the impact of DEO practices on academic achievement is positively evaluated by teachers and students, limited academic progress is found by families. In Tamas's study (2019), it was found that a large majority of classroom teachers do not have a dedicated support education room in the schools where they work, support education is primarily provided in Mathematics and Turkish classes, most teachers use lecture-based teaching methods during the instructional process, and a significant number of teachers are not sufficiently familiar with the legislation.

In this study, views and recommendations are provided for the planning of the educational environment, the student, other stakeholders, and the educational program to achieve the goals of individualized support education. In this context, after an extensive literature review, a conceptual framework regarding the structure, purpose, elements, and planning of support education has been established. It is believed that this study will guide educators, researchers, parents, and students interested in this field.

Conceptual Framework

Under this heading, supported by the literature, conceptual information about special education, support education, and educational planning is provided.

Special Education

Special education refers to educational programs and resources designed for individuals who exhibit differences in their individual and educational capabilities compared to their peers. It involves tailored instruction delivered in suitable environments by trained professionals, utilizing adapted curricula, and employing appropriate methods and tools (Citel, 2017; MEB, 2020). This definition underscores the importance of addressing the specific needs of individuals who deviate from the norm in terms of their abilities and educational requirements. These needs can vary widely, including differences in cognitive development, sensory impairments, or levels of activity. Expert teams use scientific assessments and appropriate tools to identify these needs accurately.

When determining special needs, experts must fully understand the individual's special situation. Ataman (2003) distinguishes between disability, impairment, and deficiency. He defines disability as losses in the functions of organs. He defines impairment as the negative effects on organs due to different factors. Deficiency is classified as the inability of intellectual, physical, behavioral, or sensory organs to perform their normal functions due to impairment. Çitil (2017) states that individuals with learning difficulties, emotional-behavioral disorders, communication deficits, and intellectual disabilities at risk are more common in educational environments than other disabled conditions. According to the Special Education Services Regulation (OHEY, 2018), which entered into force in Turkey in 2018, individuals' disability status is divided into 5 different groups: intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder, physical disability, visual impairment, and hearing impairment. According to a new report by UNICEF, it is stated that there are approximately 240 million disabled children worldwide (UNICEF, 2021).

It would be appropriate to include individuals with special talents among those with special needs. A person with special talents is someone who learns faster than their peers, has advanced leadership, creativity, and artistic abilities, possesses special academic talents, understands abstract concepts, enjoys acting independently in their areas of interest, and demonstrates high levels of performance.

Support Education

Students who have significant differences in cognitive, social, language, or physical development levels compared to their peers may not benefit sufficiently from general education environments. The individual characteristics of these students may not be suitable for the society, environment, and educational settings they are in. Adapting the education and environment offered to these individuals can positively affect their

integration, motivation, and academic success. In this context, there is a need for specially designed individual and peer-based environments where these students can be accommodated physically. Support Education Rooms (SER) are an example of such environments. In Figure 1, an example image of a SER is provided.



Figure 1. Physical facilities of the support education room

SERs support the social and academic development of full-time inclusion students. Additionally, they contribute to the progress of special talented students at their own pace. This contribution is highlighted by the physical design features of SERs, appropriate educational materials, and the presence of expert educators.

In SERs, peer group sessions can be conducted with individual students or with a maximum of three students together. During these sessions, personalized education plans prepared for each student are implemented, supported by enriched teaching materials. Some basic standards for the establishment of SERs in schools have been determined by the Ministry of National Education Special Education and Guidance Services Directorate in accordance with relevant legislation (MEB, 2022). However, despite the fact that the needs of support education rooms and the materials used are met by the general directorate to which the school/institution is affiliated, when studies related to support education rooms are examined, the lack of a standard classroom, teacher shortages, inadequate physical facilities, and material shortages emerge as significant problems, contrary to what is indicated in this guide.

Planning Education Services

In order to plan support education rooms in a school, the physical environment must first be planned. There must be a separate classroom for this purpose. Desks and chairs should be arranged to allow for one-on-one education between teachers and students. Play areas equipped with rubber floor covering materials should be prepared for supportive educational games. Classrooms should be equipped with information technologies such as smart boards, computers, projectors, and internet connection. Afterwards, educational support materials and supplies should be placed. Examples of these include educational games, wooden teaching materials, and activity books. There should also be creative, critical thinking, and versatile activity books and teaching materials available for our special talented students. Figure 1 lists the stages from identifying students to determining their success status.

After the physical environment design, the identification of students who will receive education follows. When identifying students, classroom teachers should recommend students in their classes who are in need of such support. Afterwards, the parents should be consulted regarding their children's referral to the Guidance and Research Center (GRC) for assessment and diagnosis. It is necessary for the diagnosed students referred to the GRC to have their diagnoses and reports delivered to the school. Then, it is decided whether these students will receive education individually or in peer groups in SERs based on their disability status.

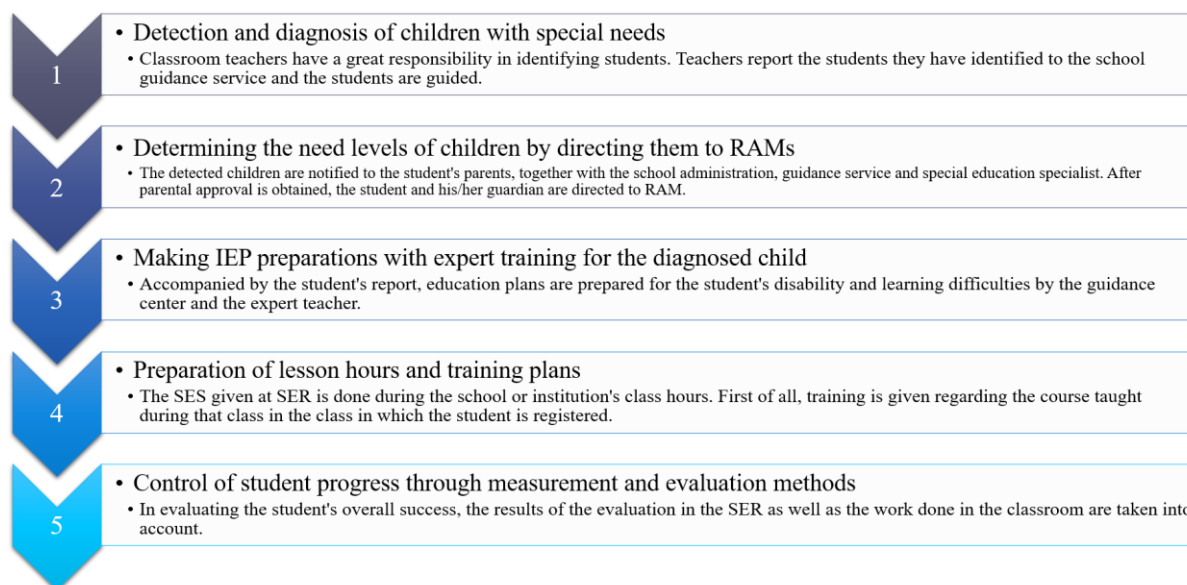


Figure 2. SER training plan stages

During the process of diagnosis conducted by the Guidance and Research Center (GRC), students' disability status is determined and reported to the school in the form of a report. The diagnosis of students generally includes:

- Learning difficulties
- Speech and language disorders
- Skill deficiencies
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- Hearing impairment,
- Mild intellectual disability

During the diagnosis of students, sometimes classroom teachers request the student's inclusion in SERs, considering the student's best interests or their lack of fit in the classroom. However, sometimes teachers may refrain from recommending the student for diagnosis or directing the family due to concerns that it may create additional responsibilities and workload for themselves (such as preparing and implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), providing one-on-one support, opening a support class, and collaborating with others). IEP is a special education program prepared according to the developmental characteristics, educational performances, and needs of individuals in need of special education, aiming at targeted goals and including support education services to be provided to these individuals (OEHY, 2018). If the student's parent is convinced after the referral, the school management requests an appointment from the GRC. Following the report from the GRC, a roadmap is drawn up for each student by the SER teacher.

After the report of students in need of support education in different areas is sent by the GRC, the planning process is initiated by the school management. During this process, a meeting is held with the parents of these students to discuss the support education room and the education they will receive there. Once the parents agree, formal procedures are initiated, and an individualized IEP is prepared.

Regarding the planning of instruction, the scheduling of when the students receiving education in the SER and the teachers providing the education will be present in the support education room is conducted by the school management. The attendance and other relevant information of the students are recorded through class registers by the school management. Rough assessment forms measuring readiness for each lesson are applied for students benefiting from these rooms. As a result, individual education plans are prepared to allow each student to progress at their own pace. When implementing these plans, adherence to teaching principles ranging from simple to complex, easy to difficult, concrete to abstract should be prioritized. Materials that facilitate learning, various visuals, and educational games should be used to make learning enjoyable and lasting. Particularly, leveraging the benefits of technology can capture students' attention. Games on the computer that allow them to learn while having fun or various tablet applications can support a more engaging learning environment and foster lasting learning experiences, breaking away from monotony.

A student can receive up to 40% of their weekly lesson hours from the SER. For elementary schools with a weekly lesson hour of 30 hours, this corresponds to a maximum of 12 lesson hours. These lessons can be taught by classroom teachers with special education knowledge and experience, special education teachers, or subject teachers. If a student cannot keep up with their classmates in certain subjects, they can attend the SER for some hours to receive the relevant lesson according to their Individualized Education Program (IEP). However, a whole lesson should not be taught exclusively in the SER. The student should also have the opportunity to take the relevant lesson with their peers in their classroom. For example, out of 5 hours of Mathematics per week, 3 hours should be planned in the Support Education Room, while the remaining 2 hours should be scheduled in their classroom. Additionally, if a student requires additional lesson support beyond these hours, with the approval of the parent, these lessons can be provided outside of the school's regular hours.

For students receiving education in the support education room, practical skill training should be provided in subjects where it is necessary according to the recommendations of the IEP development unit, in environments such as classrooms, workshops, laboratories, etc., in groups or individually. Physical Education lessons can be held in the schoolyard once a decision is made by the IEP Unit to create the environment for the Physical Education lesson. In the overall assessment of the student's achievement, the evaluation results from both the classroom and the SER are taken into account. In the SER, the current performances of the students regarding the relevant subject should be determined. When determining performances, forms developed for the type of disability specified in the regulations should be used. Additionally, goals aimed at achieving the objectives among the things the students cannot do should be identified. At this stage, the ability of students to perform tasks and behaviors they cannot do should be measured after a certain number of repetitions and recorded in the relevant forms.

Conclusion and Evaluation

In conclusion, the first step in planning DEOs in schools is to identify students who have received diagnoses. The key factor in this regard is the classroom teacher and the student's parent. While the classroom teacher may identify the student, if the student's parent does not approve the diagnostic process, the student may not benefit from this support education. Some parents are hesitant to have their child diagnosed, fearing negative labeling by their peers and society, while others may not accept their child's condition themselves. Çağlar (2016) demonstrated in their study that parents were initially resistant to the diagnostic process but supported implementation after awareness-raising activities. At this stage, school administrators, classroom teachers, and guidance counselors have been seen to occasionally organize family education sessions, collaborating to inform and persuade parents, positively impacting the process. In fact, it is observed that conscious student parents personally submit petitions to the school administration every year to benefit from support education.

Another issue is the reluctance of teachers and school administrators to support the issuance of a report for the student, which would entail workload for them and the school administration. School administrators perceiving inclusive education as a burden and not encouraging collaboration among classroom teachers with inclusive students is also a challenge. Failure to establish a BEP development unit or, if established, not implementing it effectively, negatively affects the support education process.

Explanations from administrators that their schools lack support education rooms or are not suitable for support education (due to reasons such as lack of materials and teachers) negatively impact parents of students in need of support education. Therefore, informative seminars, workshops, and conferences should be organized for school administrators and classroom teachers to develop a positive attitude towards support education rooms.

Al Mamari (2017) emphasizes that over 90% of classroom teachers do not have sufficient ability to identify students with learning difficulties. Whether teachers propose or ignore the diagnosis of students depends entirely on factors such as the number of students in the class, individual attention, and experience. McQuarrine et al. (2008) state that teachers need to differentiate content for students with reports which requires additional planning and implementation time. Similarly, Yazcayır (2020) highlighted in their study that teachers face difficulties in preparing BEPs due to lack of expertise, resulting in planning problems. According to Dapudong (2014), the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at assisting students with special educational needs hinges on teachers' familiarity with strategies that facilitate students' adjustment and their ability to acquire fundamental academic skills.

Some classroom teachers also believe that students receiving one-on-one lessons in support education rooms will lag behind in classroom lessons. However, for an inclusive student falling behind peers, having

fundamental skills is more important. Acquiring basic skills such as reading, comprehension, speaking, writing, self-expression, and arithmetic can enhance their adaptation, motivation, and academic success. Early diagnosis of students requiring DEOs is among the most important factors contributing to success (Haward, 2014; Batu & Kırcaali, 2010). Arnaiz-Sanchez et al. (2021) note that the lack of knowledge about support education rooms, apart from the experiences of school management and teachers, is a significant obstacle in the BEP implementation process.

Support education is also provided for students with special talents, but research shows that special talented students do not benefit from support education. Afat (2017) revealed a striking fact in their study. They suggested that more than half of the special talented students diagnosed in Istanbul did not benefit from DEOs. They found that only 8% of students benefiting from DEOs were special talented children, while 92% belonged to other diagnostic groups. The reasons for this include special talented students:

- Support education not being deemed necessary by the school administration or classroom teacher and parents not being adequately informed
- Receiving education at Science and Art Education Centers (BILSEM) outside of school
- Teachers lacking knowledge and skills for these students
- Lack of teaching aids and materials for supporting these students in schools
- The existence of a taboo that these students require less support education compared to inclusive students

In general, if classroom environments are not fully suitable for inclusive students without external support, they may not be suitable for special talented students either. These classrooms should be environments where these students can demonstrate their performance, progress at their own learning pace, and, most importantly, develop their curiosity. Therefore, education for these students should be enriched with creative and critical thinking activities, and various strategy games should be used to avoid monotony. The stages of the education plan for gifted students are given in Figure 3.

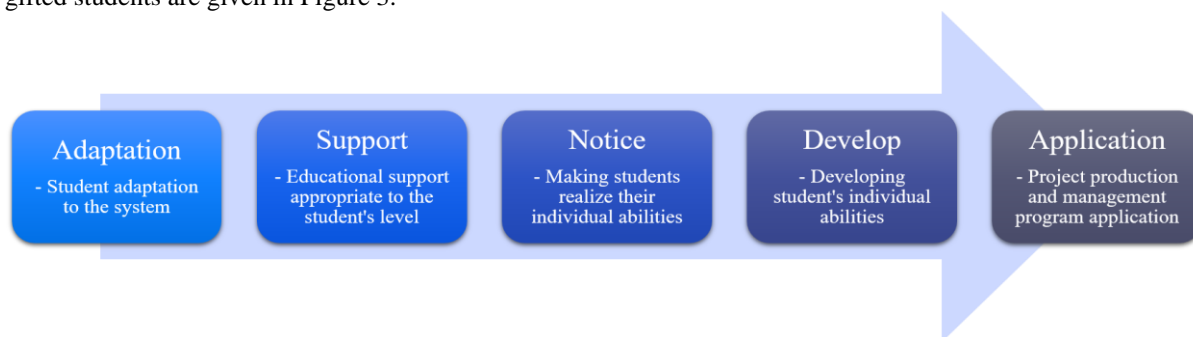


Figure 3. Educational plan stages for special talented students

Accessible quality education for everyone is a fundamental human right. Education enables individuals to develop all their qualities and skills to reach their potential. These rights must be fulfilled and protected according to certain standards. In order for states to provide education services to the entire society on an equal basis, they need to allocate a significant portion of the state budget to education plans and programs. With this allocation, all educational programs, materials, and the needs of education workers should be met. Talas et al. (2016) mentioned in their study that support education rooms are not available in every school but are becoming increasingly common.

All children are special and have different needs. Children with special needs are individuals with different emotional, intellectual, physical, and social characteristics from their peers (Kargin, 2004). Therefore, children with special needs should receive education according to their own needs, interests, and abilities. In light of developments in special education today, inclusive education, where these children receive education both in general education classrooms with their peers and in special education support, has been adopted. It is essential for inclusive students to continue their education with additional support tailored to their needs alongside their peers. This approach contributes to their social development and prevents their complete isolation from society. Therefore, the preparation of a separate curriculum for children with special needs, or at least the differentiation and customization of education content for these children based on their interests, abilities, and academic success, is seen as an important need (Işık-Ercan, 2004). Nowadays, in line with developments in special education, instead of special education separately from their peers, inclusive education is adopted, where children with special needs receive both general educations in classrooms with their peers and special education support. Children with special needs receiving education alongside their peers are also referred to as inclusive

students in schools. It is essential to ensure that these children continue their education with additional support tailored to their needs alongside their peers. Francisco et al. (2020) emphasized in their research that forcing students with special education needs to demonstrate skills that other students can perform in general education classrooms leads to despair and failure in these students. It is recommended to provide special education to address this negative situation in these students.

Cam-Tosun and Almis (2023) emphasize that the right to education under economic, social, and cultural rights is a prerequisite for individuals to be aware of, benefit from, and defend their rights in case of neglect or abuse. Furthermore, although states theoretically accept the right to education and other human rights in international agreements and reflect them in their domestic laws, this alone is not sufficient for their implementation in practice. It is necessary to protect and fulfill rights according to certain standards and principles. States need to allocate sufficient resources from the state budget to meet the needs of all segments of society, including education workers, education programs, materials, and educational techniques, to provide education services to the entire society on an equal basis.

Scientific Ethics Declaration

The author declares that the scientific ethical and legal responsibility of this article published in EPESS journal belongs to the author.

Acknowledgements or Notes

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