



## EXAMINATION OF GRADUATE THESES CONDUCTED ON PRE-SCHOOL INCLUSION BETWEEN 2016-2020 IN TURKEY

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the current research trends in graduate theses on preschool inclusion in Turkey. Document analysis technique, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the research. It was carried out on 31 graduate theses, which were obtained as a result of scanning the thesis archive of the Higher Education Council (YÖK) and were open to access between 2016 to 2020. The search was carried out by typing "pre-school integration" into the search engine of the Higher Education Institution's thesis archive. The theses included in the study were analyzed using the thesis analysis form prepared beforehand by the researchers. In the prepared form, the theses were analyzed according to the year, thesis level, university, institute, department, thesis supervisor title, research model, number of participants, data collection tool, data analysis method, and domestic and foreign references. The findings obtained within the framework of the examination were interpreted with percentage and frequency tables, and recommendations were made for future research.

**Keywords:** Mainstreaming, preschool, thesis, document analysis.

### Introduction

Like normally developing children, children with special needs also have the right to education in the least restrictive environments, based on the principle of enjoying equal opportunities in pre-school education (Yılmaz & Karasu, 2018). According to the Specialty Services Regulations Turkey (2009), pre-school education for individuals who need special education is compulsory between 37-72 months. However, taking into account the development and individual characteristics of individuals, the duration of the pre-school education period can be extended for one more year. As a result of the report prepared by the Special Education Evaluation Board established in the Guidance and Research Centers of Pre-School Education Institutions Regulation (2009), 36-72-month-old children who are deemed appropriate to be placed in pre-school education institutions are enrolled in classes with 10 children from two and not more than one in classes with 20 children, provided that they do not have severe disabilities, severe mental disabilities and multiple disabilities. As can be seen, pre-school mainstreaming practices envisage ensuring that children who need special education are systematically prepared, implemented and evaluated by taking part in educational services and participate in the society they live in independently (Eripek, 2005; Acarlar, 2019). In addition, it was determined that children with similar disability

characteristics acquired communication, social and academic skills later in differentiated educational environments compared to their peers in inclusive environments (Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis & Goetz, 1994). The organization of educational activities in normal classrooms for students with special needs all day in the general education school includes the educational activities that they continue in full-time inclusive environments (Altun, 2016). These students receive special education services in the support room for the areas or skills they need additional support, and the educational activities they continue in part-time inclusive environments.

Preschool teachers make necessary instructional and environmental adaptations in their classrooms in line with the characteristics and needs of inclusive students. The active participation of children with special needs in learning processes in inclusive environments depends on the determination and implementation of methods and techniques suitable for their individual characteristics in education programs, but it is also important to develop materials to be used (Kargin, 2019). Environmental adaptations require the reduction of materials used in teaching and activities, physical characteristics of the classroom and stimuli (Cooper & Speece, 1990), and enable students with special needs to develop social, academic and communication skills together with their peers. When considered in terms of peers in pre-school inclusive environments, it is thought that their skills to interact with individuals with special needs more easily, cooperate and problem-solving skills will develop positively in the future since these children encounter individuals with special needs at an early age (Metin, 2012; Kırcaali-İftar, 1998).

When we look at the literature, we come across many studies on inclusion and pre-school. Each study focuses on the problems that contain different sample groups related to the subject. In the study of Sönmez, Alptekin and Bıçak (2018), different results were obtained after the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in the study of preschool teachers' perceptions of self-efficacy and in-service training requirements in inclusive education with mixed method. In the quantitative dimension of the study, it was concluded that teachers found themselves competent in mainstreaming education, and in the qualitative dimension, teachers found themselves insufficient in mainstreaming education, and they needed in-service support. In his compilation study, Rakap (2017) mentioned the importance of teachers' making necessary adaptations to children with special needs, determining and implementing effective natural teaching approaches in inclusive education practices in the preschool period, and discussed the most used natural teaching approaches in detail. In the studies conducted by Sucuoğlu and Bakkaloğlu (2016) in order to examine the relationships of parents with special needs and normal development with teachers, it was determined that the quality of the relationships between parents and teachers did not differ between parents with and without special needs, as a result of the data collection tool collected with a scale in the quantitative method. Katz's study (2014), which is one of the studies emphasizing the importance of peer relationships in inclusive classrooms, found that the social skills intervention program given by their peers to children attending kindergarten with autism spectrum disorder was effective.

Postgraduate thesis studies on pre-school inclusion are important in terms of revealing different problem situations and revealing the current situation in terms of guiding future studies. In this direction, the aim of this research is to review the postgraduate thesis studies carried out in the last five years in terms of determined categories.

## Method

### Research Model

Document analysis model, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in this study, which was conducted to examine postgraduate theses on preschool inclusion in Turkey. The document review model is aimed at collecting data about the phenomenon and analyzing written sources about the information obtained (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). The analysis process provides interpretation, gaining understanding and developing experimental knowledge in the light of the acquired information (Bowen, 2009).

### Target Population and Sampling

Graduate thesis on pre-school inclusion in Turkey constitutes the universe of the research. Especially in recent years, in order to determine and interpret the development in the literature on this subject, it is limited to 31 graduate theses that are open to access between 2016-2020.

### Data Collection Tools

In this study, 31 graduate thesis studies scanned in the Higher Education Institution thesis center were processed into the thesis analysis form. The titles of the thesis analysis form consisting of 13 items are as follows: The year in which the thesis was conducted, the thesis degree, the department where the thesis was conducted, the institute and the university to which it was affiliated, the thesis supervisor title, the research method of the thesis, the characteristics and number of participants, the data collection tool of the thesis, the data analysis method and number of domestic and foreign references.

In this study, data collection was conducted by writing "tez.yok.gov.tr/National Thesis Center" in the search engine on the internet. Searching for postgraduate theses on pre-school inclusion was selected as the years 2016-2020 from the advanced screening option. Approval was given for the permission status, and only "mainstreaming" and "preschool" were written in the words to be searched. The words to be searched section, especially "mainstreaming" and "pre-school", were written because it aims to research the contents of the thesis in a wide area. Thesis studies that were scanned from the advanced screening option were eliminated according to their subject titles and 31 thesis studies were reached. The data obtained through the document analysis method were analyzed by processing in the SPSS program, percentage and frequency calculations were made, and displayed and interpreted in tables and figures.

## Findings

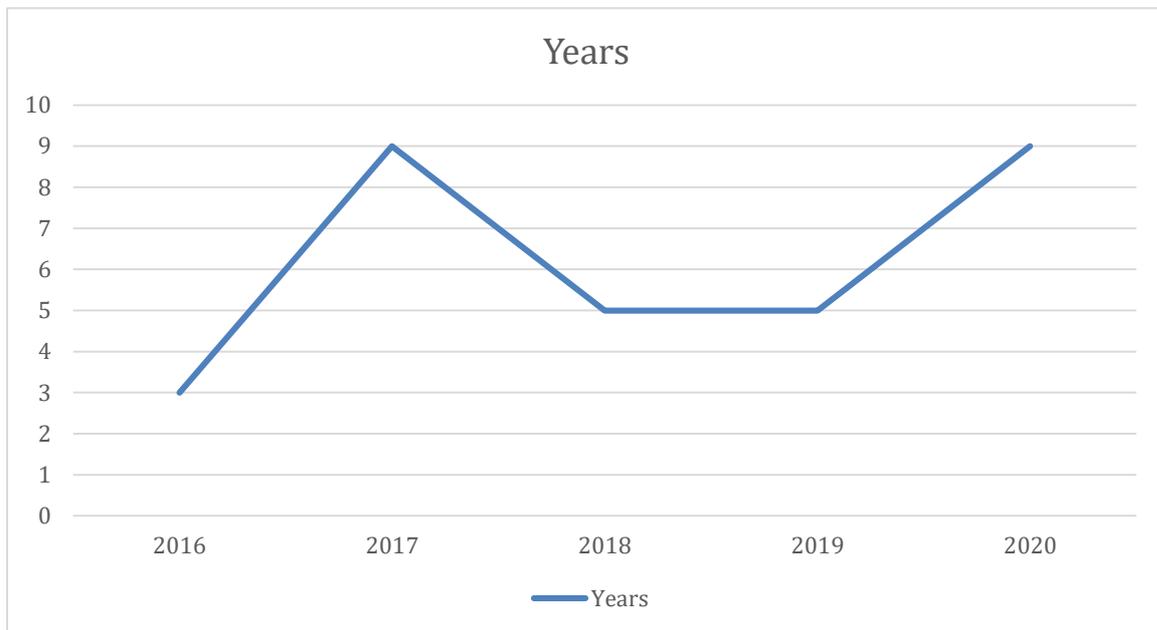
### Distribution of Graduate Theses on Pre-School Inclusion Education by Years between 2016-2020 in Turkey

In Figure 1, the distribution of postgraduate theses on pre-school inclusion by years is shown for the last 5 years in Turkey. When Figure 1 is examined, it is concluded that 3 theses were made in 2016, 9 theses were made in 2017, 5 theses were made in 2018, 5 theses were made in 2019 and 9 theses were made in 2020. According to these findings, the number of studies on inclusion and pre-school seems to be a fluctuating picture over the

years. In addition, it is seen that most of the theses (9 theses) were conducted in 2017 and 2020.

**Figure 1.**

*Distribution of theses by years*



### **Distribution of Postgraduate Theses on Pre-School Inclusion Education by Thesis Level**

When the findings on the distribution of postgraduate theses on preschool inclusion in Turkey according to their levels are examined, it was seen that most thesis was written at master's level ( $f = 24$ , 77.4%). In addition, 7 doctoral dissertations (22.6%) were made on special learning difficulties.

**Table 1.**

*Distribution of theses according to their levels*

Thesis level	$f$	%
Master's	24	77.4
Doctorate	7	22.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Distribution of Postgraduate Theses on Pre-School Inclusion Education**

#### **According to Universities**

The findings obtained from the research showed that the postgraduate theses on inclusive preschool education in Turkey in the last 5 years were carried out in 18 different universities. 18 universities with thesis number are shared in Table 2. According to the findings, most postgraduate thesis was carried out in Gazi University ( $f = 5$ , 16.3%). It is seen that Ankara, Trakya University ( $f = 4$ , 12.9%), Eskişehir Anadolu University ( $f = 3$ , 9.7%) and Çukurova University ( $f = 2$ , 6.5%) followed this rate. In the remaining 13

universities, 1 thesis has been conducted on inclusive education and pre-school studies at each university.

**Table 2.**

*Distribution of theses by universities*

University	<i>f</i>	%
Gazi University	5	16.3
Ankara University	4	12.9
Trakya University	4	12.9
Eskişehir Anadolu University	3	9.7
Çukurova University	2	6.5
Marmara University	1	3.2
İstanbul University	1	3.2
Hacettepe University	1	3.2
Yeditepe University	1	3.2
Pamukkale University	1	3.2
FSM Foundation University	1	3.2
Yıldız Technical University	1	3.2
Balıkesir University	1	3.2
Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University	1	3.2
Akdeniz University	1	3.2
Toros University	1	3.2
Kırklareli University	1	3.2
Hacettepe University	1	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Distribution of Graduate Theses Conducted on Pre-School Inclusion Education According to Institutes**

Examining the findings regarding the distribution of postgraduate theses on pre-school inclusive education in Turkey by institutes in the last 5 years, it was seen that the institute with the most thesis written was the Institute of Educational Sciences ( $f = 18, 58.2\%$ ) according to Table 3. In addition, the number of theses in the Institute of Social Sciences is 10 (32.2%). It was concluded that the number of theses belonging to the Institute of Health Sciences, the Institute of Education Management and the Institute of Education is 1 (3.2%).

**Table 3.**

*Distribution of theses by institutes*

Institute	<i>f</i>	%
Institute of Education Sciences	18	58.2
Social Sciences Institute	10	32.2
Health Sciences Institute	1	3.2
Education Management Institute	1	3.2
	1	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

### Distribution of Postgraduate Theses on Pre-School Inclusion Education by Departments

The findings obtained from the research showed that the theses were carried out in 10 different departments. When Table 4 is examined, most of the postgraduate theses on pre-school inclusion are found in special education ( $f = 9$ , 29.1%), basic education ( $f = 7$ , 22.6%), disability studies department ( $f = 4$ , 12.9%), preschool education ( $f = 3$ , 9.7%), child development and education, and educational management departments ( $f = 2$ , 6.5%).

**Table 4.**  
*Distribution of theses according to departments*

Department	<i>f</i>	%
Special education	9	29.1
Basic education	7	22.6
Disability Studies	4	12.9
Pre-school education	3	9.7
Child Development and Education Management	2	6.5
Primary Education Department	2	6.5
Mentally Handicapped Training	1	3.2
Education Programs	1	3.2
Psychology	1	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

### Distribution of Graduate Theses Conducted on Pre-School Inclusion Education by Advisor Titles

According to Table 5, when the titles of the advisors of the graduate theses on pre-school inclusive education in Turkey in the last 5 years are examined, it was determined that 11 people were associate professors (35.5%), 8 people were professor Doctors (25.7%), 6 people were assistant professors (19.4), and 6 people were doctor faculty members (19.4). Accordingly, it can be said that the theses are managed by the thesis advisors with the title of Associate Professor at most.

**Table 5.**  
*Distribution of theses by advisor titles*

Advisor title	<i>f</i>	%
Prof. Dr.	8	25.7
Assoc. Dr.	11	35.5
Asst. Assoc. Dr.	6	19.4
Dr. Faculty Member	6	19.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

### Distribution of Graduate Theses Conducted on Pre-School Inclusive Education According to Research Methods

When the findings on the distribution of methods used in the postgraduate theses on pre-school inclusive education were examined, it was seen that a total of 3 different research

methods were used in the theses. According to Table 6, quantitative research method was used in 20 of 31 theses examined (64.5%), qualitative research method (22.6%) was used in 7 of the theses, and mixed research method (12.9%) was used in 4 of the theses.

**Table 6.**

*Distribution of theses according to research methods*

<b>Research model</b>	<b><i>f</i></b>	<b>%</b>
Quantitative research	20	64.5
Qualitative research	7	22.6
Mixed research	4	12.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Conducted on Preschool Inclusive Education by Participant Characteristics**

According to Table 7, the distribution of the participant group in 31 graduate theses examined within the scope of the research is as follows: Preschool teachers ( $f = 8$ , 25.7%), students with special needs and their teachers ( $f=5$ , 16.3%), Students with special needs and no special needs, and mainstreaming students with special needs ( $f=4$ , 12.9%), parents and teachers of students with special needs, pre-school teacher candidates, children with special needs, teachers, auxiliary staff ( $f=3$ , 9.7%), students with special needs studying in recovery rooms ( $f=1$ , 3.2).

**Table 7.**

*Distribution of theses according to the participants*

<b>Participants</b>	<b><i>f</i></b>	<b>%</b>
Preschool teachers	8	25.7
Students with special needs and their teachers	5	16.3
Students with and without special needs	4	12.9
Mainstreaming students with special needs	4	12.9
Parents and teachers of students with special needs	3	9.7
Preschool teacher candidates	3	9.7
Children with special needs, teachers, auxiliary staff	3	9.7
Students with special needs studying in recovery rooms	1	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Distribution of Graduate Theses Conducted on Pre-School Inclusive Education by Number of Participants**

According to Table 8, the number of samples applied in 31 graduate theses on pre-school inclusive education in Turkey is between 1 and 100, with a maximum of 70.9%. The minimum number of samples in which the thesis was conducted is between 401 and 500 ( $f = 1$ , 3.2%). This finding shows us that the studies were generally carried out with sample groups of 1 to 200 people.

**Table 8.***Distribution of theses according to the number of participants*

<b>Number of participants</b>	<b><i>f</i></b>	<b>%</b>
1-100	21	70.9
101-200	4	12.9
201-300	2	6.5
301-400	3	9.7
401-500	1	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Conducted on Pre-School Inclusive Education According to the Use of Local Bibliography**

According to Table 9, the number of domestic references used in 31 graduate theses on pre-school inclusive education in Turkey is between 51-100 at most ( $f = 15$ , 48.1%). This rate is followed by the use of domestic references at a rate of 101-150 ( $f = 7$ , 22.6%).

**Table 9.***Distribution of theses according to the number of domestic reference usage*

<b>Number of domestic resources</b>	<b><i>f</i></b>	<b>%</b>
1-50	5	16.3
51-100	15	48.1
101-150	7	22.6
151-200	2	6.5
201-250	2	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Conducted on Pre-School Inclusive Education by Foreign Reference Use**

According to Table 10, the number of foreign references used in 31 graduate theses on pre-school inclusive education in Turkey can be seen between 1-50 with a maximum of 37.9%. In addition, it is seen that foreign resources are not used in two graduate theses.

**Table 10.***Distribution of theses according to the number of foreign references*

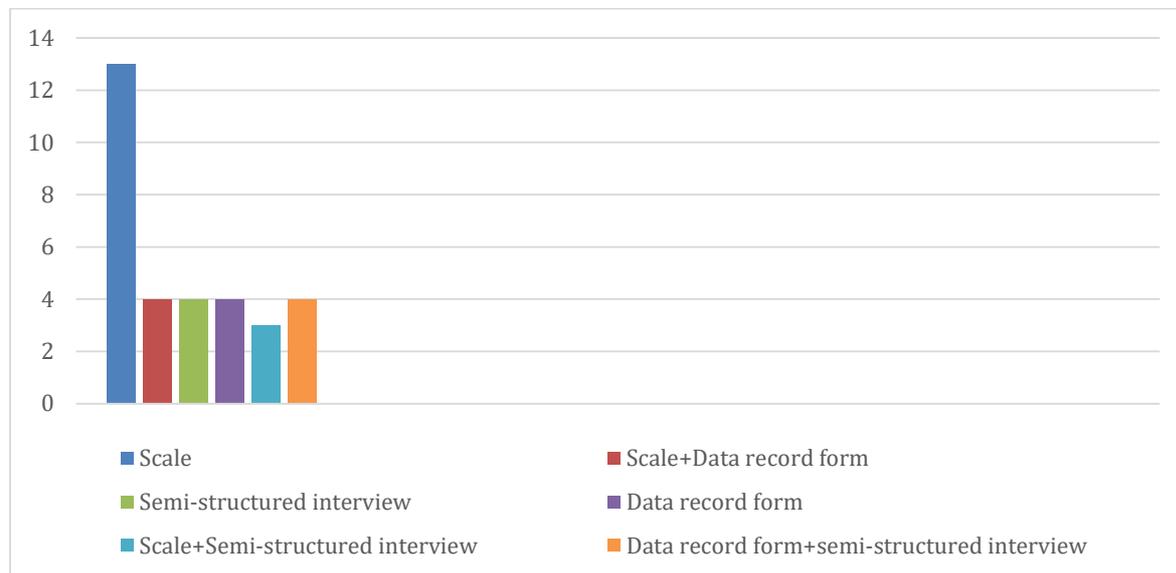
<b>Number of foreign resources</b>	<b><i>f</i></b>	<b>%</b>
0	2	0
1-50	11	37.9
51-100	8	27.6
101-150	4	13.8
151-200	2	6.9
201-250	2	6.9
251-350	2	6.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

### Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Concerning Pre-School Inclusive Education According to Data Collection Tools

According to Figure 2, it was determined that the most used data collection tool in 31 graduate theses on pre-school inclusive education was the scale. The scale is followed by semi-structured interview form, data record form, scale and data record form and semi-structured interview form. It is seen that the least used data collection tool is the combination of the scale and the semi-structured interview form. Based on these findings, it was determined that quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were not used much together, instead either only quantitative or only qualitative data collection tools were used more.

#### Figure 2.

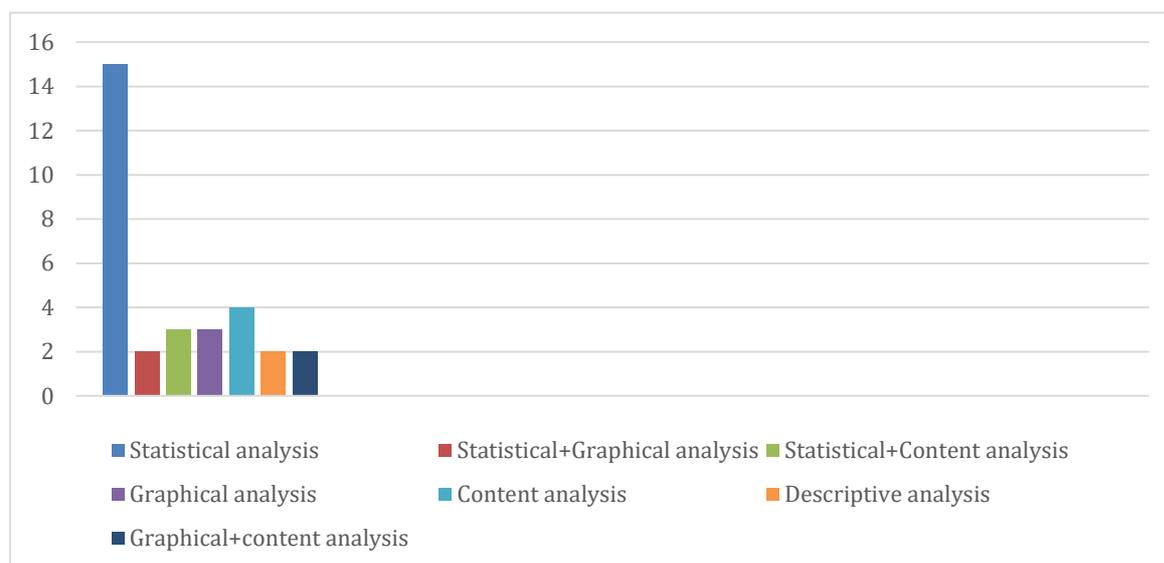
*Distribution of theses according to data collection tools*



### Distribution of Postgraduate Theses Conducted on Preschool Mainstreaming According to Data Analysis Methods

When the findings regarding the distribution of data analysis methods of graduate theses on preschool mainstreaming in Turkey according to Figure 3 are examined, it was concluded that the most used data analysis method in theses is statistical analysis methods and this finding is followed by content analysis, statistical analysis and content analysis, graphical analysis, statistical analysis and graphical analysis, descriptive analysis, graphical and content analysis methods.

**Figure 3.**  
*Distribution of theses according to data analysis methods*



### Discussion and Conclusion

This research was carried out to examine the postgraduate theses on pre-school inclusion between 2016 and 2020 in Turkey. Conclusions reached based on the findings obtained in line with this purpose and recommendations were made for these results.

When the distribution of postgraduate theses on pre-school inclusion is examined, it is seen that the most number of theses were conducted in 2017 and 2019, and the least number of theses were conducted in 2016. The number of studies on the subject has varied in recent years.

When the distribution of postgraduate theses on pre-school inclusion by thesis level is examined, it is seen that the number of master thesis studies is much higher than the number of doctoral thesis studies. It is thought that more studies to be carried out at the doctoral level will be important in developing original research and solution proposals on the subject.

When the distribution of postgraduate theses on pre-school inclusion according to universities is examined, it is seen that the thesis studies are mostly conducted in Gazi University. Again, it is seen that there are more thesis studies conducted in state universities on the subject compared to private universities. Relevant studies can be encouraged at private universities.

When the distribution of postgraduate theses on pre-school inclusion according to institutes is examined, it is determined that most of the thesis studies were conducted in the special education department of educational sciences and secondly in the pre-school department of the social sciences institute. The fact that the theses made in the field of special education make a significant difference from the studies in the pre-school field reflects that the cooperation between the two departments is not sufficient. It is thought that the studies conducted by educational sciences institutes on pre-school inclusion in the special education department and the future studies of the pre-school department on this subject will ensure that teachers' knowledge, skills and attitudes about pre-school inclusion

will increase positively with the increase in in-service training of teachers after their undergraduate education. (Avramidis, Bayliss & Burden, 2000; Kayılı et al., 2010)

When the distribution of postgraduate theses on preschool inclusion by research method is examined, it is seen that quantitative research method is used more. With the increase in the selection of qualitative research and mixed methods, the realization of perceptions and events in the natural environment in a realistic and holistic manner will enable the effectiveness and results of the research process to be revealed more effectively. It was stated that the most studied subject was related to teachers' opinions, attitudes, and knowledge due to the fact that the use of quantitative methods was more in the document analysis research of the studies conducted in the preschool period between 1992-2013 by Metin (2016). According to this result, the most preference reached in the study supports the findings of the research method and participant characteristics.

When the distribution of graduate theses on pre-school inclusion according to the participants is examined, it is seen that there are fewer studies that focus on preschool teachers and the students with special needs. In addition, based on the principle of cooperating in inclusive environments, it has been determined that the studies conducted with family and school administrators and staff are much less. The sample group of the theses is mostly 1-100 participants. Increasing the sample size of the studies may eliminate the limitations of the study and allow us to reach a reliable result. In the graduate theses (Altunışık, Coşkun, Bayraktaroğlu & Yıldırım, 2012) that fit the content of this study, where non-experimental quantitative research methods are used excessively, it is argued that sample sizes between 30 and 500 are sufficient for most research. Bakkaloğlu and others (2018) stated in their research they conducted with document analysis that the majority of research participants were teachers and teacher candidates.

The maximum number of domestic references used in 31 graduate theses on pre-school inclusion in Turkey is 51-100, and the number of foreign references is between 1-50. The sources used together with the referenced current sources can be considered sufficient within the scope of the subject of the study.

The distribution of postgraduate theses on pre-school inclusion according to data collection tools is mostly scale-test or information form or survey application. Increasing other data collection tools such as observation and interview, or the use of data collection tools in which quantitative and qualitative research methods are used together can be increased.

When the findings on the distribution of data analysis methods of postgraduate theses on mainstreaming in preschool in Turkey are examined, it is concluded that the most used data analysis method in theses is statistical analysis methods and this finding is followed by content analysis, statistical analysis and content analysis, graphical analysis, statistical analysis and graphical analysis, descriptive analysis, graphical and content analysis methods.

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