

Guidance and Research Centers (GRC) Managers' Perceptions of Problems Encountered in the Identification, Placement –Follow up, Individualized Education Program (IEP) Development and Integration Practice

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to determine of the Guidance and Research Center (GRC) managers' opinions about unexpected problems of identification, placement-follow up, IEP development, and integration practicing. Being a descriptive study, the research data are collected from 116 managers of GRC. The inquiry form, which is developed by the researcher, is used for collecting data. Frequency, percentage, t-test and ANOVA technique are used to analysis of collected data. (In the conclusion of the research shows us, the managers of GRC perceived some problems of diagnosing, placement-follow up, IEP development, and integration practicing) It was understood that GRC Managers' graduated licensing program and professional seniority was not efficient on the perceptions of these problems. In addition, It was determined that there were differences in perceptions of problems in the diagnostics field in terms of gender, in the fields IEP development and integration practice in terms of age, and in the fields placement-follow up and IEP development in terms of the duration of the study as GRC Managers.

Key Words

Guidance and Research Center, Identification, Placement-Follow up, IEP Development, Integration.

Principle of opportunity equality in education is one of the main requirements of democratic societies. It seems that it is not seen possible to provide opportunity equality for the students who need special education without serving special education to those students. Each student is different from the other one. These differences can be grouped in general as physical, cognitive and affective. Every student has his or her own unique physical structure and functions, learning skills and pace in various areas, emo-

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tional features. Students can benefit from general education services when these differences are within some limitations. However, general education services are inefficient for the students where those differences are in a bigger dimension, and special education should be required (Kırcaali-İftar, 1998).

Since every student has different physical structure, intelligence level, ability, interests, emotion and thoughts, it was accepted centuries ago that education should be organized according to those differences. Today, it is accepted that differences among abilities that the students have are important as much as differences among the students (Akçamete & Kargın, 1992). Thereby, requirement of structuring knowledge and skills that are gained to the students according to time, place, conditions, and especially students' characteristics and personal differences is known.

Ignoring personal differences turns into disadvantage for the students who need special education; it

seems that students who need special education are pushed away by ignoring personal differences (Özbek, 2005). However, today, the number of students who need special education is much higher not to be ignored. It is expressed that these students should be educated in suitable educational environment and programs by stating that approximately 14% of the student needs special education by any kind and level, in other words 4 of 30 students in a classroom are potential special needed students (Sarı, 2002). The aim of special education that is a part of educational system is to provide suitable education and opportunity equality in education for the student who cannot fulfill requirements of normal education for any reasons (Akçamete, 1997).

Getting into social life independently for the students in special education is possible by determining educational requirements of the student by taking their individual features and what they can do into consideration; and providing suitable educational environment for the requirements (Cavkaytar, 2000). The students who need special education should benefit from the suitable educational opportunities in order to make them develop at the highest level in the direction of their needs (Kargin, 2003). The students who need special education have the right of utilizing from educational service that meet their needs at best like other normal students (Batu, Kircaali-İftar & Uzuner, 2004). In the education of the students who are handicapped as it is in the education of the other students, it is aimed that they will continue their lives without depending on others, become adequate for themselves, and be integrated to the society (Eripek, 2005).

According to Eripek (2007), the students who are handicapped, first of all, should be evaluated by depending on identification in order to benefit from special education services that they need. During the identification it is sought whether the student is suitable for special education or not. Objective, standard tests and various measurement tools are used for this aim. As the result of that evaluation, student's competence and disability are determined (Gürsel, 2005). Without disability confirmation it is impossible for the students who need special education to benefit from compulsory education. It is possible for the students to benefit from compulsory and special education after their disability is approved (Özyürek, 2004). After disability confirmation, that is to say determining competence or disability, the best educational environment is decided and the students are placed to that environment with the allowance of the parents by ta-

king their personal features and educational requirements (Gürsel, 2005). So that all the individuals who need special education can benefit from the special education at the level of their interests, wishes, competence and abilities.

The students who need special education are placed to suitable official school or organization according to the report of special education services commission. The aim of the placement decision is to determine the most suitable program for the students who need special education (Fiscus & Mandell, 1997; Taylor, Richards, & Brady, 2005). After placing students at any educational organization, in order to plan special educational services and provide persistence in education, monitoring progress of the students who need special education at each step of the education from early childhood is the basis. Monitoring progress of the students is prosecuted by renewing education plans by being evaluated according to the suitability of special education services and the level of realization of aims in their individualized education programs (IEP) (Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı [MEB], 2006). IEP, which is developed according to the things that students can do or not, also eases communication among people who serves for the student (Avcıoğlu, 2009).

Jobs of identifying, placement, monitoring and, if it is necessary, providing additional services for the students that need special education are undertaken by the Guidance and Research Centers (GRC) that is bound to National Education Ministry (Eripek, 2000). National Education Ministry opens GRC in every province, and depending on population and service need, in every town according to regulation of opening GRC (Cavkaytar & Diker, 2005). GRCs offer the least limited environment for the individual by prosecuting educational evaluation, identification, monitoring and guidance services of the students who need special education and offer additional education with guidance and psychological consultation service to individuals and their parents (MEB, 2006). In brief, by determining performance of the students in their progress areas, the best and most suitable educational program and school for the students who need special education and whose educational evaluation and identification have been done are decided in these centers. However, it is required that the students who need special education should be identified, placed, monitored and evaluated correctly by taking their performance into consideration (Özak, Vural & Avcıoğlu, 2008). GRCs and GRC managers who are officially responsible for this application

have important roles. Determining the thoughts of the GRC managers will be important for prosecuting these applications healthily.

In Turkey, there are few researches in the literature about GRC managers' perception of problems encountered in the application of identification, placement-monitoring, and integration. In these studies, Akkoyun-Kamen (2007) tried to determine thoughts of GRC personnel about integration education; Özak et al. (2008) tried to determine GRC managers' thoughts and suggestions about identification, placement, and evaluation; Tike (2007) tried to determine GRC employees' attitude towards IEP preparation progress and problems that they can encounter; and Tiryakioğlu (2009) tried to determine how GRC managers perceive the problems of special education department. It is thought that GGRC managers have an important role in the application of identification, placement-monitoring, developing IEP and integration. It is thought that determining whether GRC managers have problem perception or not in these areas on the current applications will meet an important requirement.

In this study it is aimed to determine thoughts of GRC managers about the problems that are encountered in the applications of identification, placement-monitoring, developing IEP and integration. For this aim the answers have been sought to the questions below.

1. What are the thoughts of GRC managers about the problems that are encountered in the applications of (a) identification, (b) placement-monitoring, (c) developing IEP and (d) integration?
2. Do the thoughts of GRC managers about the problems that are encountered in the applications of identification, placement-monitoring, developing IEP and integration differ significantly according to (a) gender, (b) age, (c) vocational seniority, (d) duration as a GRC manager and (e) their undergraduate program?

Method

Research Model

This research is a quantitative study about determining thoughts of GRC managers about the problems that are encountered in the applications of identification, placement-monitoring, developing IEP and integration.

Research Universe

198 GRC managers who are bound to Special Education Guidance and Consultancy Services along the country constitute the universe of the study. GRC managers who attended an in-service training organized by National Education Ministry (NEM) constitute the sample of the study. 82 of the GRC managers did not attend the training by getting sick report and permission. 116 GRC managers were included in the study. It was determined that 96 of the managers who attended the training were male and 20 of them were female, and it was seen that 16 of them were between 0-30 years old, 82 of them were between 31-40, and 18 of them were between 41-50 years old.

When their undergraduate programs were analyzed, it was determined that 86 of them were graduated from Guidance and Psychological Counseling (GPC)/Psychology, 30 of them graduated from Education Management and Planning (EMP)/Educational Programs and Teaching (EPT). When their vocational seniority were analyzed, it was determined that 12 of them have 0-5 years, 42 of them have 6-10 years, 54 of them have 11-20 years, 8 of them have over 20 years seniority. When their duration as GRC managers were analyzed, it was determined 26 of them had been working below 1 year, 34 of them had been working between 1-3 years, 32 of them had been working between 4-6 years, 14 of them had been working between 7-9 years and 10 of them had been working 10 years or over.

Collecting Data

In this study questionnaire form that was developed by the researcher was used to collect data. In Part I, there are five expressions about personal information of GRC managers. In Part II, there are expressions about problems that are encountered in the application; 16 expressions are about determining problems of identification, 8 expressions are about determining problems of placement and monitoring, 8 expressions are about determining problems of IEP, 13 expressions are about determining problems of integration. Cases that can be a problem were determined by getting thoughts of guidance teachers, special education classroom teachers and information from the regulations of special education services. Cases that were determined as problem were analyzed 3 people who are specialist in their areas and the last form of the questionnaire was determined. Help was asked from experts while questionnaire was being prepared. After forming the questionnaire, compre-

hensiveness of the questionnaire was tested by interviewing with 10 GRC managers. As a result of data got from 10 people, it was determined that questionnaire is clear and comprehensive. So there was not any change on the questionnaire.

Part I was formed as multiple choice. Expressions in Part II are five likert type such as 1) completely disagree, 2) disagree, 3) neutral, 4) agree, 5) completely agree. According to this scoring, GRC managers were asked to choose best alternative for them in the questionnaire from that allows scoring from 1 to 5. None of the expressions in the questionnaire can be scored from the reverse. Scoring was like this: completely agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), completely disagree (1) and empty expressions are (0).

About the validity of the questionnaire, specialists were consulted. Cronbach Alpha coefficient was calculated in the reliability study. Reliability of the questionnaire that was applied to the sample was tested and Cronbach Alpha coefficient was determined according to sub-dimensions of the study; identification 0,82, placement 0,69, IEP 0,90 and integration 0,90.

Analyzing Data

In order to analyze data, frequency and percentage of GRC managers' answers to the expressions in the questionnaire were calculated. Then, t-test and ANOVA were used to determine whether gender, age, vocational seniority, duration as a GRC manager and their undergraduate program are significant or not on their perception of problems that they have encountered. Scheffe test was used in order to find out significant differentiation.

Findings and Discussion

GRC managers mostly declared that general scanning programs are inadequate or not common; medical identification results are not in reports in detail; families are not informed clearly and sufficiently after medical identification and they are not directed regularly; especially families are not directed in progress that needs genetic identification. In the studies that were done by Tiryakioğlu (2009) and Bozkurt (2009) similar results were found out and in both pre-school period and primary school period, students are directed to GRC mostly by the organizations that they are going on if they are students in that organizations or by their families instead of hospitals.

This situation shows that families are alone after medical identification and they are not directed. General scanning programs should be increased in order to make students benefit from early diagnosis and therapy programs. When it is thought that, in our country, necessary information are not given to the families and directed; it is so important for both families and students, it is necessary to generalize general scanning programs and it is necessary for hospitals to take much more responsibility in informative and directive duties in this progress. At the same time it is thought that students should be directed immediately in order to benefit from educational services and educational identification after writing reports that are prepared by hospitals more clear and comprehensible way and in detail.

According to other finding of the study, not forming multiple disciplinary educational identification and evaluation team that is suitable for regulation of special education services in GRCs, old fashioned educational identification and evaluation tools, not having suitable physical arrangements in the environments where evaluation is being done, and not taking social environment into consideration are among important problems. Same situations are stated as problem in the Rehabilitation towards Handicapped Children and Special Education Services Study report that was declared in 2006 by Primeminister's Handicapped Office Presidency. Though the time passed, it is challenging that the same problems have continued and those problems are declared by GRC managers. As it is stated in special education services, it is necessary to form an evaluation team that depends on multi disciplinary or developing current team if there is in order to make the team more efficient and functional. Moreover it is important to make environments suitable in terms of heat, noise isolation, and light. Renovation of the educational identification and evaluation tools is also important. In addition, it is seen necessary to take features of students' parents and social environment into consideration since, especially in educational evaluation progress, factors that affect each student's life are different; choosing more functional and beneficial skills, student's environment and culture where he or she lives during his or her education.

When the data about IEP were examined, the most important problems that were declared by GRC managements were: (a) while preparing IEP, parents' needs are ignored, (b) informing parents and as a result of this providing efficient attendance of the parents are not provided, (c) knowledge and skills

of current personnel are not adequate on preparing and application of IEP by determining special needs of individuals in GRCs, (d) not forming a team according to multi disciplinary concept in order to determine special education services that students need and to prepare IEP and (e) not to have sufficient resources about how to prepare, apply, and evaluate IEP. In the study of Çuhadar (2006), during IEP preparation period, it was determined that parents do not deliver their needs to the school, in the schools that have not IEP development unit or IEP is not prepared studies are not done as it should be, managers and teachers do not have adequate knowledge about IEP and they do not benefit from GRC personnel and guidance teacher of the area. Likewise in the study of Öztürk-Çimen (2009) teachers who are at training and application schools where the research was conducted stated that they do not have adequate knowledge about IEP and they do not find sufficient resource about preparing IEP except special education teachers and special trainer managers at schools. In another study, it was stated that GRC personnel has negative thoughts towards forming IEP team and its functions (Tike, 2007). These results show that different studies that have been conducted by various researchers at different times have similar problems. According to the National Education Ministry Special Education Service Regulations (MEB, 2006), although regulations were done, problems with preparing and developing IEP are still continuous.

According to another finding of the research, GRC managers expressed that (a) placements of students, who are found suitable for integration program and need special education, are done without paying attention of the capacity of the classroom, physical equipments, education environment, number of personnel, and its quality; (b) education programs cannot be individualized according to handicap groups and this causes students not to benefit from the education program efficiently. In the studies, there are such findings that schools of most teachers have insufficient conditions and they are not suitable for the students who need special education (Bilen, 2007; Lloyd, Kauffman, Landrum & Roe, 1991; Öztürk-Çimen, 2009); different education and training cannot be provided for the students who attended to integration program in the classroom and at school; these students' progress is provided by following normal education program from behind; they are looked after if there is time; these students are made free in general in the classroom, so their social and psychological behaviors are tried to be controlled (Çuhadar, 2006); except

special education teachers, most of other teachers do not use Individualized Education Program; and they do not determine equipments and tools that are suitable for educational method (Pektaş, 2008). These findings are parallel to the research in hand. According to these results, it is understood that required steps are not taken toward individualization of the programs according to handicap groups of the students who need special education in order to make those students benefit from the program during the time and problems continue since students are not placed as they can benefit from the program that they are in.

Most of GRC managers declared that "IEP that is on different subjects and duration and focuses on developing communication skills, academic and social skills is not prepared and applied by paying attention to students' personal developmental features, learning competences and handicaps and at the same time IEP that will be prepared for special needed individuals does not cover their plans". Findings that are got from this study are parallel to the finding of Pektaş (2008) in the way that approximately half of the teachers in the study did not use all the service plan and finding of Bilen (2007) in the way that most of classroom teachers do not use IEP for integration students. These results show that both GRC managers and teachers have common thoughts that IEP is not prepared efficiently and they perceive problems in the same way.

Finding of the study of Sanır (2009) in which he found that most of teachers do not give examination to the students who are integrated while they are giving examination for the other students and they do not use suitable measurement tool for integrated students while they are evaluating students achievements and the study and finding of the study held by Batu (1998) there are problems at evaluating handicapped students with an examination, passing class, and graduation; approve the thoughts of GRC managers "not applying system of passing class and course instead of passing program system according to handicap features".

In the study held by Bilen (2007) it was found out that most of the teachers declared that they have no special education teacher and they have not attended to any courses for integration education; and in another study it was found out that one of the most frequent problems is that there are not adequate additional service personnel (Batu et al., 2004). It was determined by the study that was held by Myles and Simpson (1989) that teachers' expectations of additional service affect their attitudes of them. The re-

searchers determined that classroom teachers need consultant services, in-service training in order to apply integrated education successfully as a result of the questionnaire that was applied to classroom teachers. In two different researches on this subject, most of the teachers claim that they believe to integrated education but they do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to train students who are handicapped, so they have problems since they do not feel prepared and do not know what to do and how to react when they encounter an unusual situation (Baker & Zigmond, 1990; Conway & Gow, 1988; Manset & Sammel, 1997; Pivik, McComas & Laffamme, 2002; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). In this study GRC managers' common thought of "there is no personnel who supply additional service for the students who placed to integration program and need special education and for the classroom teachers" show similarity with those studies. It is thought that teachers will not feel desperate and they will get over easily with the problem that will be encountered in the classroom with personnel who will provide additional service and will be provided by National Education Ministry.

As a result of these findings, these recommendations can be given for further studies: (a) In the recovery of the problems that appear during identification, placement-monitoring, IEP development and integration applications, it will be useful for National Education Ministry to take results that are determined in this study into consideration. (b) Providing personnel who can provide additional service for the teachers and students who need special education and are placed to integration programs and additional service will be useful. (c) Generalization of general scanning programs will be suitable in order to make students benefit from early diagnosis and rehabilitation services in early childhood. (d) Taking features of student's parents and social environment into consideration in educational evaluation progress will contribute to develop student's education program. (e) If the students and their parents took part in IEP unit, it will contribute to develop IEP that is the most suitable for the students. (f) Individualization of the education programs that students, who need special education, attend according to handicap groups will provide students to utilize from the program that they are placed. (g) For integration students, following IEP application and doing monitoring will provide to follow students' development and interfere in if it is necessary. (h) Although duties and responsibilities of ones who take part in identification, placement-monitoring, IEP development

and integration applications are stated in the National Education Ministry Special Education Service Regulations, studies that analyze reasons of the problems that are found out as a result of this study are required. (i) Similar to this study, a study in which quantitative and qualitative dimensions are integrated as it is in this study can be planned. (j) Data was collected from 116 GRC managers in this study. This study can be held again by adding all GRC managers and experts and specialists who work in GRCs into the study.

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