

## An overview of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey

**Miyase Akcay**, Department of Special Education, Ataturk Faculty of Education, Near East University, Nicosia-North Cyprus, Mersin 10, Turkey.

**Tugce Karabag**, Department of Special Education, Ataturk Faculty of Education, Near East University, Nicosia-North Cyprus, Mersin 10, Turkey.

**Basak Baglama\***, Department of Special Education, Ataturk Faculty of Education, Near East University, Nicosia-North Cyprus, Mersin 10, Turkey.

**Yucehan Yucesoy**, Department of Classroom Teaching, Ataturk Faculty of Education, Near East University, Nicosia-North Cyprus, Mersin 10, Turkey.

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### Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education carried out in Turkey based on various variables. A total number of 200 postgraduate theses on mainstreaming education was obtained from Higher Education Council of Turkey. Data of the research were examined based on content analysis criteria including year of publication, supervisor title, thesis level, university, institute, department, gender of thesis writer, research method, participants, data collection tool, data analysis method, location of the research conducted, research subject and results. Data of the research were analysed with SPSS 20 program. Research showed that thesis was conducted between 1997 and 2018. According to the results, the majority number of thesis was carried out in 2017, the quantitative method was mostly preferred research method in thesis, master thesis was mostly preferred, scales were mostly used data collection tools and statistical methods were mostly used as data analysis methods. In line with the results of the research, recommendations for further research and practices were presented.

**Keywords:** Mainstreaming education, special education, postgraduate thesis, content analysis.

\* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Basak Baglama**, Department of Special Education, Atatürk Faculty of Education, Near East University, North Cyprus, Mersin Turkey. E-mail address: [basak.baglama@neu.edu.tr](mailto:basak.baglama@neu.edu.tr) / Tel.: +00-392-223-6464

## 1. Introduction

Special education includes different educational practices for students with special needs. One of these practices is stated to be inclusion (Diken, 2010; Hardy & Woodcock, 2015). Inclusion has emerged as a philosophical approach and it provides a basis for keeping individuals with normal development and individuals with special needs together (Buli-Holmberg & Jeyaprathaban, 2016). The other form of special education practice is mainstreaming education, which involves special education services that provide support services for children in need of special education based on continuing their education with their peers in regular classes. It has been stated that individuals with special education needs receive education in special education institutions and the prevalence of mainstreaming has increased from past to present (Ilik, 2019; Salama & Elsayed, 2019; Sucuoğlu & Kargin, 2010).

The basis of mainstreaming education policies was laid in the United States in 1970s. In 1970s, the first legal legislation on inclusion of families with special needs due to their children's labelling was established. In 1975, the Education Act for all persons with disabilities was decided to gather a single framework for the provision of services for children with special needs and the idea of the least restrictive environment gained importance with this law (Turnbull et al., 2004). In 1990s, the law on the education of individuals with disabilities was named. According to this law, educational institutions accept all children regardless of their disability. Every child has the right to free education, as much as possible, should receive education with their peers with normal development (Citil, 2012).

According to Ozyurek (2012), mainstreaming education plays an important role in terms of the participation of children with special needs in social life and supporting all areas of development. Particularly in terms of socialisation, their participation in education together with their peers contributes positively to both the peer group and the children attending mainstreaming education. It is mentioned that mainstreaming education programs should be made for inclusion in order to increase quality of life of children in need of special education. Components such as schools, teachers, school administrators, children with and without special needs and their families affect the successful mainstreaming practices in which all children have positive gains (Aktan, Budak & Botabekovna, 2019; Ewing, Monsen & Kielblock, 2018; Lusdoc & Namoco, 2019).

Opportunities should be provided for all children to learn as much as possible during experiences, activities and routines in mainstreaming education settings. Adapting, which means changing or arranging materials, environment, interactions, teaching methods to support children individually, is an important element in successful mainstreaming practices (Cross, Traub, Hutter-Pishgahi & Shelton, 2004; Yildirim, Yildirim & Dolgunsoz, 2019). Which of these arrangements should be made can be decided by considering the needs of children in the classroom. Tufan and Yildirim (2013) emphasised that the adaptation is not to change the layout of the class completely, but it can be considered as making arrangements for the active participation of all children by using the creativity and knowledge of teachers in the current order. Educational environments are both a psycho-social and physical environment where learning and teaching activities take place, where teachers, children and families interact (Karakucuk, 2008). Successful mainstreaming education environments play an important role in the development and potential of individuals with special needs to reach the highest level.

In this study, it is aimed to determine postgraduate theses on mainstreaming education in Turkey. Examination of theses is important in terms of understanding what kind of education should be given by revealing the problems and some requirements and changes in mainstreaming education in Turkey in recent years. In regard to examining postgraduate theses on mainstreaming education between 1997 and 2018, the importance of increasing the number of studies on mainstreaming education and the developments in the field has been emphasised.

In line with the general aim of this study, answers to the following questions were sought in this study:

1. What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to year of publication?
2. What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to university?
3. What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to institute (graduate school)?
4. What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to department?
5. What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to thesis level?
6. What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to title of thesis supervisor?
7. What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to research method?
8. What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to research sample?
9. What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to data collection tools?
10. What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to data analysis methods?
11. What is the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to location?

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Research model**

This study was designed according to the case study method which is one of the qualitative research designs. The case study is a qualitative pattern in which an event, environment, program, social group or interconnected systems are examined in depth. The situation examined in the case study can be any event, activity, program or individual and these situations are defined depending on time and place (Merriam, 2009). In this context, the case study design was used in this study, where the current status and trends of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education were examined in terms of various variables.

### **2.2. Population and sample**

The population of this study is the postgraduate thesis in the field of mainstreaming education in Turkey written between 1997 and 2018. All theses on mainstreaming education from past to present were chosen to determine the trends of the graduate studies in the related field in recent years. In this study, sampling methods were not used and the entire research population was tried to be reached. Two hundred open-access postgraduate theses in the field of mainstreaming education were accessed through YOK thesis screening centre. The theses which are not related to mainstreaming education were excluded from the scope of this study. Therefore, 200 postgraduate theses were obtained after searching the database of YOK thesis screening centre.

### **2.3. Data collection**

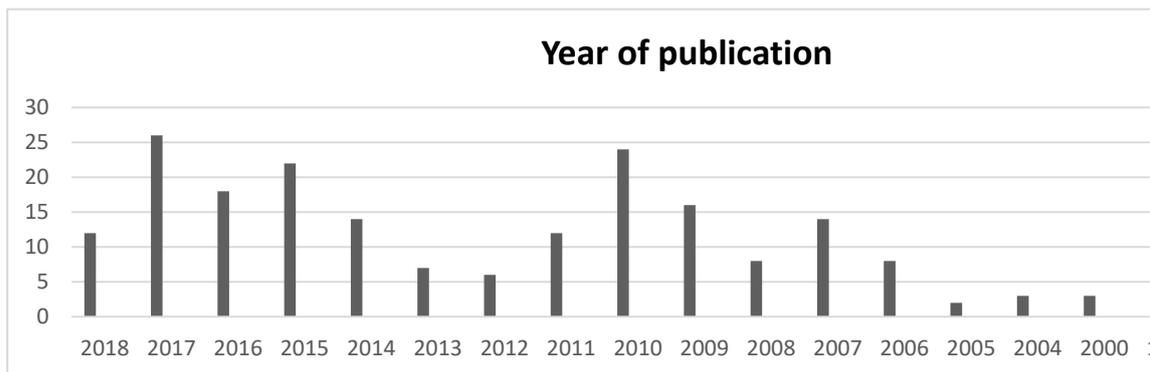
In the YOK thesis database, 'mainstreaming education' keyword was searched with the option 'Include in the thesis title'. Then, a data pool was created from 261 theses obtained and theses which are not open access were excluded. As a result, the data set of this study consisted of 200 theses. A database formed and all data were entered.

## 2.4. Data analysis

In this study, the content analysis method was used since it was aimed to examine the current status and trends of postgraduate theses in the field of mainstreaming education in terms of various variables. Content analysis is the method of collecting and analysing the content of a text or document. In this study, postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education was examined based on various content analysis criteria including year of publication, university, institute (graduate school), department, thesis level, title of thesis supervisor, research method, research sample, data collection tools, data analysis methods and location. All obtained data were entered into the SPSS program and results are presented with tables and figures in terms of frequency and percentages.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to year of publication



**Figure 1. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to year of publication**

Figure 1 shows the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to year of publication. As can be seen from the figure, publication of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey started in 1997 and there is a steady increase in the number of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education especially after the years of 2006 and 2013.

### 3.2. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to university

**Table 1. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to university**

University	f	%
Anadolu University	33	16.5
Gazi University	22	11.0
Ankara University	14	7.0
Abant İzzet Baysal University	14	7.0
9 Eylül University	11	5.5
Selçuk University	8	4.0
Hacettepe University	6	3.0
Yeditepe University	6	3.0

Table 1 shows the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to university. According to the results, there were 53 different universities with publication

of thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey. However, universities with higher publications are demonstrated in the table. As can be seen, Anadolu University and Gazi University have more publications with mainstreaming education in Turkey.

### 3.3. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to institute

Table 2. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to institute

Institute	<i>f</i>	%
Institute of Educational Sciences	110	55.0
Institute of Social Sciences	77	38.5
Institute of Natural and Applied Sciences	7	3.5
Institute of Health Sciences	6	3.0
Total	200	100

Table 2 shows the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to institute. Results showed that the majority of the thesis was written in Institute of Educational Sciences ( $f = 110$ ; 55.0%) and Institute of Social Sciences ( $f = 77$ ; 38.5%).

### 3.4. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to department

Table 3. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to department

Department	<i>f</i>	%
Special Education	71	35.5
Primary Education	34	17.0
Educational Administration, Supervision, Planning and Economics	15	7.5
Curriculum and Instruction	12	5.0

Table 3 provides information on the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to department. Results showed that there were 27 different departments with publication of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey. On the other hand, departments with frequent publications are included in the table. According to the results, department of Special Education, Primary Education, Educational Administration, Supervision, Planning and Economics and Curriculum and Instruction have the highest publications on mainstreaming education in Turkey.

### 3.5. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to location

Table 4. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to location

Location	<i>f</i>	%
Ankara	38	19.0
Eskisehir	32	16.0
Istanbul	19	9.5
Different locations in Turkey	18	9.0
Izmir	10	5.0
Bolu	7	3.5
Konya	6	3.0

Table 4 shows the results on the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to location. The locations with high frequencies are shown in the table. As can be seen, Ankara and Eskisehir have the higher publications on postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey.

**3.6. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to thesis level**

Table 5. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to thesis level

Thesis level	<i>f</i>	%
Master thesis	178	89.0
Doctorate thesis	22	11.0
Total	200	100

As can be seen from Table 5, most of the postgraduate thesis written on mainstreaming education is master thesis (*f* = 178; 89.0%) and the remained postgraduate thesis is doctorate thesis (*f* = 22; 11.0%) between the years of 1997 and 2018.

**3.7. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to title of thesis supervisors**

**Table 6. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to title of thesis supervisors**

Title of thesis supervisors	<i>f</i>	%
Prof. Dr.	40	20.0
Assoc. Prof. Dr.	52	26.0
Assist. Prof. Dr.	101	50.5
Dr.	5	2.5
Prof. Dr. & Assist. Prof. Dr.	2	1.0
Total	200	100

Table 6 shows the distribution of postgraduate thesis written on mainstreaming education according to title of thesis supervisors. According to the results, it is seen that most of the postgraduate thesis is supervised by supervisors with the title of Assist. Prof. Dr. (*f* = 101; 50.5%).

**3.8. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to research method**

**Table 7. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to research method**

Research method	<i>f</i>	%
Quantitative method	103	51.5
Qualitative method	74	37.0
Mixed method	14	7.0
Single-subject research method	5	2.5
Experimental method	3	0.5
Action research	1	1.5
Total	200	100

7 shows the distribution of postgraduate thesis according to research method. As can be seen from the table, most of the postgraduate thesis used quantitative method (*f* = 103; 51.5%). The other

remained and most frequently used research methods were qualitative ( $f = 74$ ; 37.0%) and mixed research methods ( $f = 14$ ; 7.0%).

**3.9. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to data collection tools**

**Table 8. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to data collection tools**

Data collection tools	f	%
Scale	85	42.5
Semi-structured interview form	59	29.5
Questionnaire	26	13.0
Questionnaire & semi-structured interview form	13	6.5
Interview and observation forms	6	3.0
Observation form and scale	4	2.0
Achievement test	3	1.5
Document analysis	2	1.0
Observation form	2	1.0
Total	200	100

Table 8 shows the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to data collection tools. According to the results, scale ( $f = 85$ ; 42.5), semi-structured interview form ( $f = 59$ ; 29.5%) and questionnaire ( $f = 26$ ; 13.0%) are the most frequently used data collection tools in the postgraduate thesis written on mainstreaming education. Results also showed that interview, observation forms, achievement tests and document analysis are also used as data collection tools in the postgraduate thesis written on mainstreaming education.

**3.10. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to data analysis method**

**Table 9. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to data analysis method**

Data analysis method	f	%
Parametric statistical methods	120	60
Content analysis	45	22.5
Induction	13	6.5
Descriptive and content analysis	12	6.0
Graphical analysis	6	3.0
Non-parametric statistical methods	3	1.5
Case study analysis	1	0.5
Total	200	100

As can be seen from Table 9, the most frequently used data analysis method in the postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education is parametric statistical methods ( $f = 120$ ; 60%). This result is followed by content analysis ( $f = 45$ ; 22.5%), induction ( $f = 13$ ; 6.5%) and descriptive and content analysis used together ( $f = 12$ ; 6.0%).

### 3.11. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to sample

**Table 10. Distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to sample**

Sample	<i>f</i>	%
Classroom teachers	49	24.5
Teachers working at schools with mainstreaming education	33	16.5
Preschool teachers	20	10.0
Parents of children with special needs who receive mainstreaming education	11	5.5
Total	200	100

Table 10 shows the results on the distribution of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey according to sample. As can be seen from the table, there are four main groups which are determined as sample groups studied in the postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey. These groups are classroom teachers ( $f = 49$ ; 24.5%), teachers working at schools with mainstreaming education ( $f = 33$ ; 16.5%), preschool teachers ( $f = 20$ ; 10.0%) and parents of children with special needs who receive mainstreaming education ( $f = 11$ ; 5.5%).

## 4. Discussion

In this study, postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education carried out in Turkey from the past to present was examined. The thesis was examined based on many variables such as year of publication, university, institute, department, thesis level, title of thesis supervisor, research method, sample, data collection tool, data analysis method and location. As a result of the examination, 261 postgraduate theses on mainstreaming were reached. However, since 61 theses were not allowed to download by the authors, a total number of 200 thesis was included in this study. Accordingly, a total number of 142 researches including 78 master thesis, 9 doctorate thesis and 55 articles on mainstreaming education in Turkey were examined in another study (Batu, Cure, Nar, Govercin & Keskin, 2018).

When the theses examined are classified according to year of their publication, it was determined that the number of postgraduate thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey has increased since 2006 and the highest number of thesis was carried out in 2017. The reason for the increase in the number of research on this subject in recent years has been revealed that mainstreaming education has become increasingly important and prevalent and needs to be emphasised because of the necessity of inclusion of students with special needs in general education environments (Elyildirim, 2019; Sanir, 2009; Sefotho, 2015). Results also showed that most of the thesis was carried out in Anadolu University and Gazi University. Similarly, Tastepe et al. (2016) found that thesis on mainstreaming education in the preschool period was mostly done at Gazi University and Mehmet Akif Ersoy University. This result might be primarily related to another result showing that most of the thesis was carried out in Ankara and Eskisehir.

When the distribution of theses on inclusion according to the institute is examined, Institute of Educational Sciences ranks first with 110 publications. When the distribution of the theses according to the department is examined, it is observed that the highest number of thesis was done in the Department of Special Education and Primary Education. The reason for this might be due to the fact that inclusion is an important component of special education practices and students with special needs generally start to receive mainstreaming education support at primary education (Sulun & Girli, 2016). When the results on thesis level are considered, it was observed that the number of master thesis is higher when compared to the number of doctorate thesis. When the title of thesis supervisors is examined, it is seen that most of the thesis was carried out with thesis supervisors with the title of Assist. Prof. Dr.

In the thesis studies related to mainstreaming education, it was found that quantitative and qualitative methods were mostly used and experimental method and single-subject research method were the least methods used. In parallel with these results, Kale, Nur and Kara (2017) showed that quantitative and qualitative methods were primarily used in thesis on mainstreaming education in the preschool period between the years of 2010 and 2015. It was also determined that scale was mostly used as data collection tool and observation and document analysis were not frequently used. In data analysis methods, parametric statistical methods and content analysis were mostly preferred by the researchers.

Results also showed that classroom teachers were the most frequent sample group in the thesis on mainstreaming education. This might be related with the fact that classroom teachers experience problems due to the inadequate level of knowledge and skills on teaching in mainstreaming education mainstream teachers and mainstreaming students and they need to be more aware of this issue (Avcioglu, 2017; Berigel, 2017; Chander, 2016; Chandler, 2019; Gurgur, Kis & Akcamete, 2012; Sani-Bozkurt, 2018). Accordingly, it can be inferred that more research has been done with classroom teachers in order to find solutions to their problems and to help them in this matter. In all levels of education, teachers are the mediators of effective and successful inclusion and peer harmony of students with normal development and special needs (Ehsan, 2018). On the other hand, one of the most frequently studied sample groups is parents of the children with special needs. In the process of mainstreaming education, family participation has increased recently and special education laws promote family participation (Blanchard, 2016). Therefore, most thesis related to mainstreaming education focused on carrying out research with classroom teachers and families of children with special needs, which play a crucial role in the successful implementation of mainstreaming education.

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are provided:

- Further research should address different issues and dimensions related to mainstreaming education, especially at the doctoral level.
- It is recommended to carry out studies focusing on advanced education periods.
- Further research might use different scientific research methods such as single-subject research and case study.
- In this study, thesis on mainstreaming education was examined. Further research should examine thesis on inclusion which is becoming more prevalent as a special education practice.
- Other publications such as articles and proceedings on mainstreaming might be also examined in order to determine the trends.
- This study might be replicated periodically to show developments and changes in the trends in the thesis on mainstreaming education in Turkey.

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