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COMPARING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN TURKEY AND ARGENTINA¹

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Abstract

Comparative Education is a discipline that helps to identify the similarities and differences between two or more education systems in different cultures and countries, and which puts forward useful suggestions about the ways to educate people (Türkoğlu, 1985). Ever since the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), inclusive education has taken considerable steps globally. In this sense, governments have taken action to apply educational policies in order to eliminate students' disadvantages arising from gender, disability, culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, etc. The purpose of this paper is to compare inclusive education in Turkey and Argentina utilizing Bereday's (1964) comparative education model. Comparing inclusive education in Turkey and Argentina not only contributes to a better understanding of the inclusive education implications in these two developing countries, but it also helps in defining problems and proposing solutions. While inclusive education policies in Turkey focus on disabled students and students with learning difficulties, in Argentina they focus on disadvantaged groups in order to provide educational equality.

Keywords: Comparative education, inclusive education, Bereday, Turkey, Argentina

1. Introduction

School systems in many countries have grown significantly, and rates of enrolment have risen remarkably. Millions of people formerly outside of formal education have gained access to schools. The rise of schooling creates new opportunities for various student groups to acquire an equal and suitable education (OECD, 2003). In particular, disadvantaged students have increasingly accessed education through inclusive education, and, in this regard, inclusion has become a main educational policy in many countries (Tiwari, Das, & Sharma, 2015).

OECD's Center for Educational Research and Innovation published the first comparative study on inclusive education in 1995 (OECD, 2007). Since then, inclusive education has played its part in comparative educational studies. When carrying out such research, certain standards are necessary in order to analyze and compare inclusive education because the terms special and inclusive education mean different things in different countries. For example, while in some countries special education needs refers only to students with sensory, cognitive, emotional, communication, and multiple disabilities, in others it includes those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Further, some countries include those from ethnic minority backgrounds, while others encompass gifted children. As noted by Mitchell (2005), different countries define the concept of inclusion from their own social and cultural

perspectives, and there are various characteristic features for inclusive education in different countries.

The definition of inclusive education remains unclear among both academic researchers and international organizations (Hayashi, 2014), and no definition has yet been agreed for the concept (Pearson, 2005). Still, it is based on the belief that the right to education is a basic human right. While Rouse and Florian (2010) define inclusive schools as diverse problem-solving organizations with a common mission emphasizing learning for all students, Ainscow (1999) argues that inclusive education is a broader term covering several features of inclusion; according to his definition, inclusive education is a process concerned with the identification and removal of barriers, focused on the presence, participation, and achievement of all students, particularly on groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion, or underachievement. Lately, the consensus is that inclusive education goes beyond school enrolment to ensure the full participation of all students in school life (Erkilic & Durak, 2013).

To introduce some order into this situation, OECD countries have agreed to reallocate their own national categories into three cross-national categories (OECD, 2007): category A includes those students whose disabilities clearly arise from organic impairment; category B refers to those students who have learning difficulties that may well be acquired, for example through unsatisfactory experiences in and out of school; and category C includes those who have difficulties because of social disadvantage. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to education (United Nations, 1948). Likewise, in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, it is clear that every child has the right to education, and a child who is physically, mentally, or socially handicapped shall be given the special treatment, education, and care required by his or her particular condition (UNICEF, 1959). Equality of opportunity is a prior condition of a democratic society (MEB, 2010). Article 42 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey provides for the right to education. Inclusive education, which has been rapidly spreading and developing, is a good opportunity for all children to achieve equal educational opportunities.

It can be argued that, special education experienced a transformation towards the end of the 1990s. While students with special needs were formerly educated in separate schools and classrooms, with the launch of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) in 1997, special education took on a new perspective. Before the design of this framework, special education was mainly understood to refer to the education of children with disabilities that took place in special schools or institutions distinct from, and outside of, institutions of regular school and university systems. In many countries today, a large proportion of disabled children are, in fact, educated in regular institutions (OECD, 2003; UNESCO, 1997). Furthermore, substantial steps have been made in the second half of the 20th century to derive equal educational opportunities for those with special education needs, with some prominent ones listed below (Eğitim Reformu Girişimi, 2011):

1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

1950 Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

1982 World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons

1989 Declaration of the Rights of the Child

1990 World Conference on Education for All

1993 Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

1994 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action

2000 World Education Forum, Dakar

2006 Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities

Today, the issue of inclusive education is a significant challenge facing education systems throughout the world. Therefore, comparative studies on inclusive education may provide detailed information on the inclusive education systems of different countries. Indeed, a need for collaboration and networking amongst member nations in research and teaching on inclusive education was also highlighted and emphasized by the Salamanca Statement. Given this background, the main objective of this paper is to undertake a comparative analysis of the current situation of inclusive education in Turkey and Argentina.

2. Method

This is a comparative educational research study. Comparative studies in education naturally investigate educational systems or phenomena in different places. It is generally accepted that there are many varied problems in education, and there would be no single best method to compare such a variety (Noah & Jennifer, 2013). With this in mind, this study was conducted using Bereday's (1964) comparative education model, which is a prominent comparative educational method in the literature. In this context, data was collected through document review. Bereday (1964) suggests that researchers conducting comparative educational studies should familiarize themselves with the cultures to be compared and guard against their own cultural and personal bias. As an analytical method, this model allows researchers to compare educational systems and phenomena in different countries in a systematic way. The four basic steps in Bereday's model include 1) Description and data collection: In this stage, pedagogical data from the various countries selected for the study is collected and presented using tables and graphs; 2) Interpretation: This stage involves an analysis of the facts using methods from different social science streams; 3) Juxtaposition: In this preliminary stage of comparing facts and findings, concepts and principles are used to classify and process the data; and 4) Comparison: This is the final stage of Bereday's comparative method, which involves a final fusion of the data from other countries for the purpose of comparison and to derive plans for action.

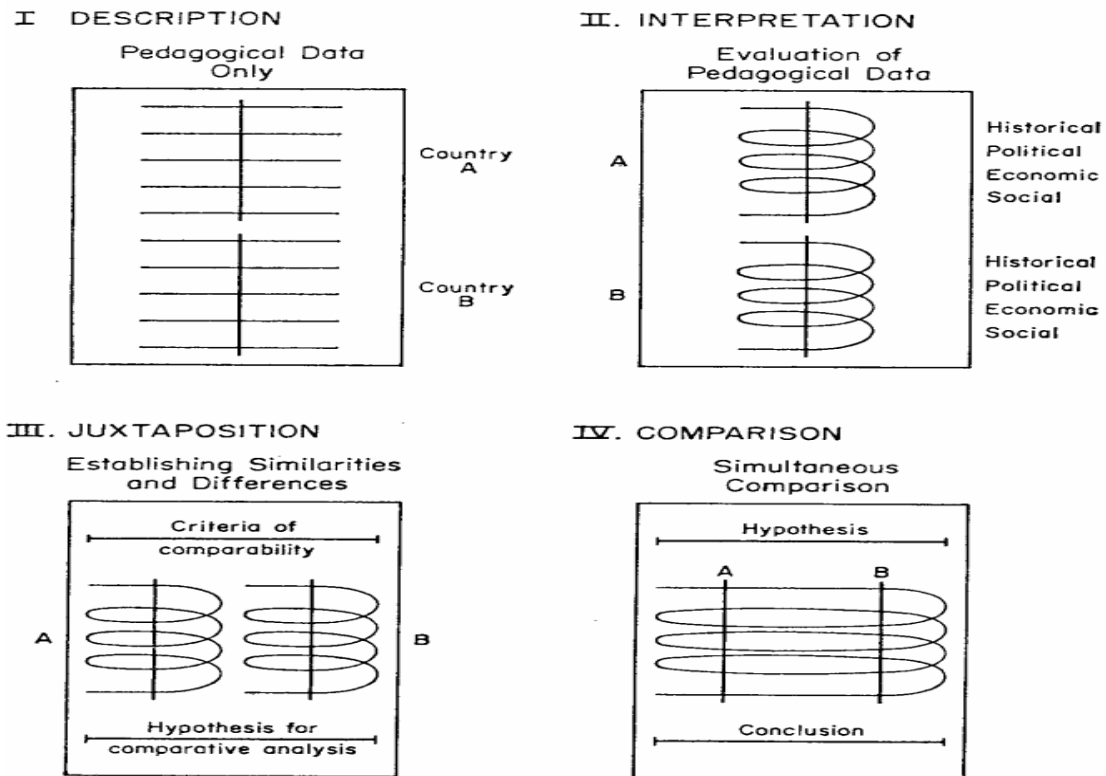


Figure 1. Bereday's comparison method

Figure 1 shows that Bereday's model provides researchers with a systematic approach for comparing educational systems. Through this model, factors affecting education are evaluated and compared in detail.

3. Findings

This section presents inclusive education in Turkey and Argentina through the four steps suggested in Bereday's model. Existing data from the two countries' inclusive education systems was described individually in the first step (description), and then the data was further interpreted and evaluated in the second step (interpretation). Data from each country was compared to establish similarities and differences in the third step (juxtaposition), while a simultaneous comparative analysis was conducted in the fourth step (comparison).

3.1. Description

3.1.1. Inclusive education in Turkey

The Office of Special Education, part of the Ministry of National Education, recruits, coordinates, and monitors all special education services in Turkey in order to improve the quality and quantity of such services. Inclusive education, as a part of special education services, is overseen from the same office. According to Special Education Services Legislation (MEB, 2006), article 23, inclusive education is a special education service to enable students with special education to receive education with their peers in normal primary and secondary school classes as well as non-formal educational settings. Therefore, students with special education needs in Turkey may receive education in a variety of settings, which are shown in Figure 2.

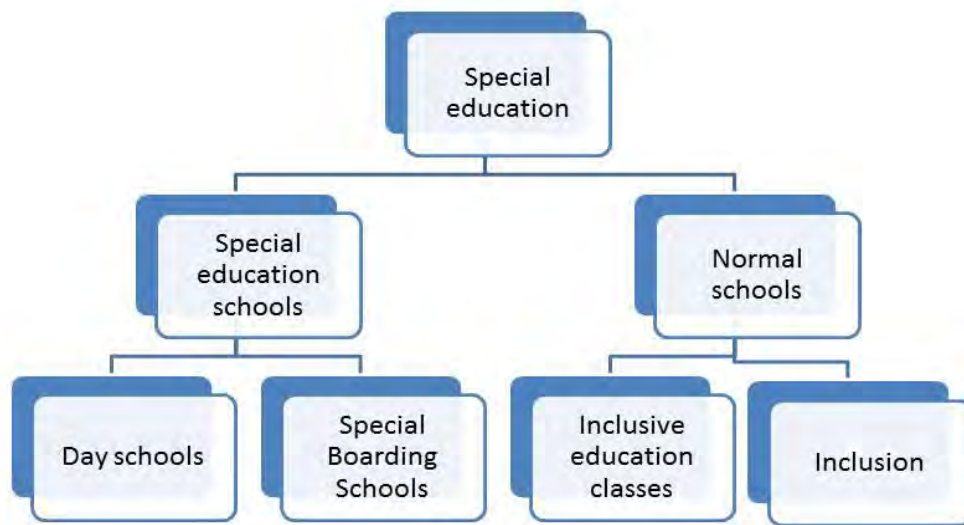


Figure 2. The structure of special education in Turkey

As Figure 2 shows, one area of special education is inclusive education. There were 17,588,958 students receiving education in preschools, primary schools, secondary and high schools in the 2015-2016 academic year in Turkey, and the number of students with special education needs was 288,489 (MEB, 2016). Inclusive education student numbers have been growing. There are 202,541 inclusive education students in total in Turkey: 1,399 of them are in preschool, 81,380 in primary school, 92,032 in secondary school, and 27,730 in upper secondary school (MEB, 2016).

Students with special needs from different special education categories in inclusive settings vary notably, including those with intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments, physical impairments, special abilities, attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity, speech disorders, autistic disorders, learning disabilities, and chronic illnesses (MEB, 2013). There are three different types of inclusive practices in general education systems: full time inclusive education (at mainstream schools), part-time inclusive education (students who are enrolled in a special education class but who join mainstream education classes with other students), and reversal inclusive education (students without disabilities who, on their request, enroll in classes at special schools).

The history of legislation related to the education of students with disabilities in mainstream schools dates back to 1983, with the Children with Special Education Needs Law (No. 2916). Later, the publication of the Special Education Regulation (No. 573) in 1997 clarified issues concerning the education of students with disabilities. Inclusive education started to become more widespread after this legislation on special education, which not only emphasized the need to take account of special education needs, but also explained the roles of the main bodies responsible for implementing this process and underlined that schools

were expected to implement inclusive education in order to provide education appropriate to students' needs and to monitor their development (Sakız & Woods, 2014). In the 9th Development Plan, it was stated that, "in the education of children with special needs, inclusive education will be the priority and the physical conditions of existing schools will be improved" (Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, 2016, p. 95). In accordance with these regulations, the number of students in inclusive education has grown. Figure 3 shows the number of inclusive and special education students in Turkey between 1990 and 2010.

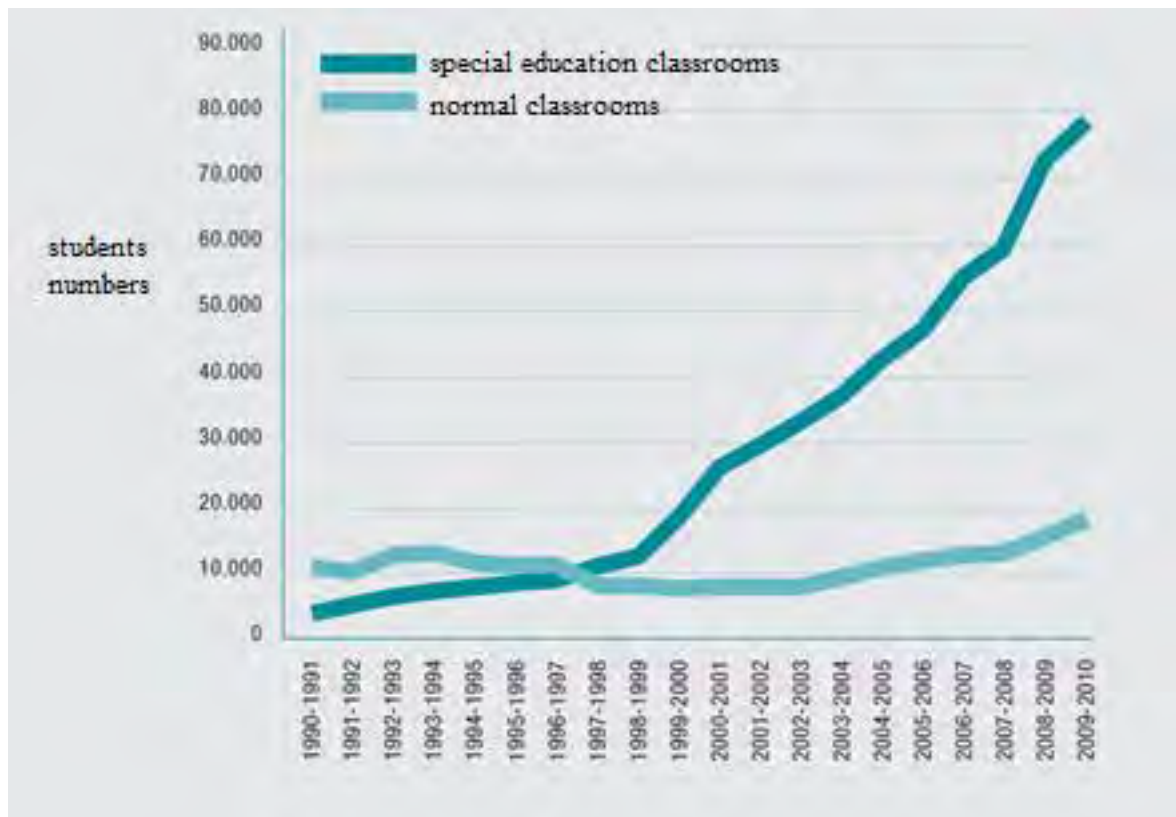


Figure 3. The number of inclusive students in special education classrooms and normal classrooms, 1990-2010

Source: Eğitim Reformu Girişimi, 2011

Starting from 1997, we can see a substantive increase in the number of inclusive education students, a situation which is strongly connected with the Special Education Regulation (No. 573). A more comprehensive and clear explanatory definition on inclusive education was outlined in the regulation on special education schools in the Official Gazette of TR (No.18953). Accordingly, if there are students with special education needs, and there is not a special education school available, then they should be educated in mainstream classes.

3.1.2. Inclusive education in Argentina

The Republic of Argentina, within the framework of the federal system, has an estimated population of 42 million. Though Argentina has a high level of education, its quality has been debated (Auguste, Echart, & Francheeti, 2008; Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu, 2014). The duration of compulsory education is 13 years. There are 45 state and 57 private universities, with 80% of students studying in the state universities. Similar to Turkey, per capita income is around \$11,000. However, there is a significant income gap. The education system is comprised of pre-primary, primary, secondary and high school, and higher education. The literacy ratio (97%) is above the Latin America average, and the schooling rate has grown

significantly in recent years (OECD, 2010). In this sense, more than 12 million students are enrolled in schools, making up one-third of the total population (Auguste et al., 2008).

Students with special education needs are protected by law in Argentina (Rodríguez-Ferrand, 2007). They have special rights because of their condition. State schools are free, which is also true for inclusive education. In Argentina, inclusive education and equal learning opportunities are presented as an entitlement for all, regardless of socio-cultural background, skills, abilities, and expectations (IBE-UNESCO, 2007). Within such an understanding, inclusive education covers those students as defined in national category C of OECD's three cross-national categories, and inclusive education policies for the education system are shaped accordingly. Inclusive education policy recognizes the particularities of different social groups and their educational needs, which has opened the way to guaranteeing the state's commitment to institutionalizing tailored and inclusive educational pedagogies. Examining two basic reform movements can reveal the object and content of inclusive education in Argentina. The first one came about through the Federal Education Law (Ley Federal de Educación), which enacted the social education plan (Plan Social Educativo) between 1993 and 2000 (Gorostiaga & Ferreira, 2012). The aim of the social education plan was to supply society with basic educational needs, such as schools and resources (Gorostiaga & Ferreira, 2012). In this sense, schools were given the freedom to manage resources and develop projects according to the needs of the community (IBE-UNESCO, 2007). Besides this, the plan also prioritized the poorest in supplying materials and improving facilities in schools.

The second reform period started in 2003. In replacing the Federal Education Law, its aim was to ensure that the specific educational requirements and needs of the community were met. Within this reform, the Law on Educational Financing (2006), the Law on Professional Technical Education (2005), and the National Law of Education (2006) were introduced. In addition, the design and implementation of the National Program for Educational Inclusion helped to develop inclusive education (Gorostiaga & Ferreira, 2012).

3.2. Interpretation

This section provides interpretation of the data presented in the descriptive analysis above. In order to discuss and analyze inclusive education from different perspectives, the interpretation will be based on historical, economic, and geographical specificities and will be outlined for each country.

Though special education goes back to the 16th century in Turkey, with the Enderun, the Ottoman school for the gifted (Kargın, 2004), current inclusive education started in the 1980s and has developed notably since then (Sucuoğlu & Kargın, 2011). While it started only as special education in separate special schools or classes, inclusive education has developed over time. Both the definition and the implications in Turkey show that inclusive education focuses on students with disabilities.

However, there is limited information on inclusive education in Turkey. Though developed countries present detailed statistics on inclusive education, the Ministry of National Education in Turkey only provides the numbers related to inclusive education students (Cakiroglu & Melekoglu, 2014). Improved economic welfare in Turkey between 2006 and 2011 encouraged spending on education, and the number of children receiving special education noticeably increased.

Inclusive education in Argentina has begun to develop, especially in the 2000s, and is aimed towards social justice and equality. Fernando de la Rúa won the primary elections in 1999, and the country had serious crises in 2001 and 2002. These crises, which also brought

about currency devaluation, may have had an effect on the country's educational policies. Special and inclusive education policies and implications in Argentina fall within cross-national category C (Munoz, 2012; Rodriguez-Ferrand, 2007; Zetu, 2006).

3.3. Juxtaposition

Similarities and differences with regard to inclusive education for both countries are presented in this section. In Argentina, rather than disability, inclusive education is more concerned with social justice and equality, which is why it is difficult to present a systematic inclusive education framework. The two countries show similar historical developments of inclusive education. Argentina faced severe crises at the beginning of 21st century, and from that time equality and justice have been two key political foci, and we can see that this is reflective of the situation and implications for inclusive education in the country. On the other hand, special education and inclusive education policies and implications in Turkey correlate with cross-national categories A and B. Furthermore, there is limited officially published statistical information regarding students with special needs in the inclusive classroom in both countries.

3.4. Comparison

In the final step of Bereday's model, inclusive education in two countries is compared and the results are presented without generalization. Inclusive education mainly focuses on the position of students with disability and special needs in Turkey. However, there is no clear evidence as to how inclusive education affects students in Turkey (Cakiroglu & Melekoglu, 2014). On the other hand, in Argentina, inclusive education focuses on students with social disadvantages. In many countries, such students do not even attend schools, let alone a special school (Srivastava, Boer, & Pijl, 2015).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to compare inclusive education in Turkey and Argentina using Bereday's (1964) comparative education model. Increasingly, governments are using comparisons in education to better understand their national education systems and create new policies. This also applies to special and inclusive education. The results of comparison can contribute to any country, in implementing the explored differences between inclusive education systems of different countries. In particular, developing countries have paid more attention to inclusive education in the last two decades (Srivastava et al., 2015).

While the inclusive education aspect of special education has been carried out in special schools and classrooms both countries, it has undergone considerable transformation, especially since the 2000s. Three cross-national categories of inclusive education defined by OECD were used to compare inclusive education in Turkey and Argentina. Category A includes students with disabilities arising from organic impairment, category B refers to students with learning difficulties, and category C includes those having difficulties due to social disadvantage. Inclusive education policies in Turkey mostly aim towards categories A and B, while they focus on category C in Argentina. In addition, inclusive education in both countries has developed significantly since the 2000s. With regard to including aspiring students with special education needs in society, there are diverse implications for inclusive education in different parts of the world, particularly when comparing Western or developed countries and developing countries (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011). Through this study, we can see that there are even different implications amongst two developing countries. On the other hand, both Turkey and Argentina have PISA scores lower than the

OECD average (OECD, 2016), a situation which reminds us to question the quality of the education being implemented.

Comparative educational studies should not only deal with systematic or mechanic comparisons but the outcome and quality of education should also be analyzed and compared. Inclusive education policies in Turkey should also include students with social disadvantages. Further, more research articles and statistics need to be published concerning inclusive education in Argentina.

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