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## Examination of Preschool Teacher and Teacher of Mentally Retarded Candidates' Opinions about Mainstreaming

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### Abstract

This study aimed to assess opinions of preschool teacher and teacher of mentally retarded candidates' opinions about mainstreaming. This research was conducted with 110 teacher candidates who study in the departments of Preschool Teaching (third year) and Teaching the Mentally Retarded (second year) in a private university in Nicosia in TRNC. Demographic information form which was composed of 4 questions about teacher candidates and attitude scale which was composed of 30 items related with mainstreaming were used in this research. According to the answers given to the surveys, it was determined that teacher candidates should be made more conscious about mainstreaming.

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### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, individuals with special needs have the right to benefit from equality of opportunity in the educational environments as every individual. Individuals with special needs also feel belonging to society through this. At this point, mainstreaming come into operation.

Mainstreaming is the special education practices in which individuals with special needs receive their education and as well as support education services in formal and private preschool, primary education, secondary education and non-formal education institutions with their peers who do not have disabilities (O.E.H.Y.) Change: 31.07.2009/R.G. : 27305).

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The aim of mainstreaming education is not to make the children with special needs normal; aim of mainstreaming education is to provide the opportunity to children to use their interest and talents in the best way, facilitate them to live in the society.

The importance of early intervention, mainstreaming practices and instructional adaptations related with students with special needs have gained acceleration with the developments in preschool education in Turkey. While practices in early intervention, mainstreaming practices and instructional adaptations in preschool education of children with special needs are very important in increasing the development of these children to the highest level and providing them the opportunity to receive education at equal opportunity with their peers who do not have disabilities towards appropriate instructional adaptations; it was noteworthy to indicate that there is a limited number of studies which examine these concepts together (Tufan & Yildirim, 2013).

Mainstreaming has began to be applied as an education model in Turkey in 1983; the number of students with disability who receive education in general education classes increased every year and reached 70.000 in the 2010-2011 academic year (MEB, 2010). States and governments should provide all opportunity and rights to students with disabilities as they provide them to normal children and develop policies about this (Minou & Manuchehr, 2012).

Discussions about mainstreaming education have began in our country after the year of 1990s and it was determined to open mainstreaming classes as mainstreaming trial. In the first years, mainstreaming classes which was only opened in a school in Nicosia and have to be closed after the negative reactions of the parents began to become widespread after 3rd National Education Shura. Today, special education services are reached in 13 schools in 13 mainstreaming classes with 13 special education teachers for approximately 350 students. However, the presence of institutions as strong constitutions in the regions always made themselves an attraction center and triggered children who needs to be in mainstreaming to come these constitutions. This compromised the accomplishment of mainstreaming. These disruptions in mainstreaming were also identified by the authorities of National Ministry of Education and the target of mainstreaming education has been emphasized again in a memorandum with the signature of Primary Education Management in September 29th, 2006 (Saygi, 2009).

The problems experienced in the accomplishment of mainstreaming practices showed the necessity of gaining sufficient information and experience related with special education of teachers who work or will work in mainstreaming environments in their education process. However, it is so difficult to change the attitudes and behaviors of teacher candidates related with students with special needs after they enter into professional life (Jordan, Schwartz & McGhie-Richmond, 2009). In this process, even teacher candidates participate in in-service training, course or seminars, since they have critical opinions about mainstreaming, their opinions will be negative about mainstreaming education (Hursen & Kaplan, 2012). Nevertheless, the intellectual attitude, emotional reactions, various habits of the teacher affect the students (Tacman, 2009).

### *1.1. Aim of the Research*

Main aim of the research is to investigate preschool teacher and teacher of mentally retarded candidates' opinions about mainstreaming. In addition, the study tried to answer the following questions about preschool teacher and teacher of mentally retarded candidates;

1. Do opinions of teachers about mainstreaming show difference based on their age?
2. Do opinions of teachers about mainstreaming show difference based on their gender?
3. Which disability group will have the lowest success in mainstreaming?

### *1.2. Importance of the Study*

Since there is limited number of studies about preschool teacher and teacher of mentally retarded candidates' opinions about mainstreaming in our country, this research is important. This study is expected to make up for this deficiency and thought to contribute to other researchers.

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