

The effects of the inclusive environment on the development of young children with disabilities



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Biography

Bulbin Sucuoğlu is a full professor in early childhood division in the faculty of education at the Hacettepe University. Her research includes early childhood special education, quality of inclusive classrooms, professional development of teachers and parent training. Hatice Bakaloğlu is an associate professor of special education at the Ankara University. Her research focuses on early interventions for children with disabilities, inclusive preschools and preschool and special education teacher training.



Abstract

The early years are valuable for all children and being in an inclusive environment with same-age, typically developing children is essential to the development of young children with developmental disabilities. The children with disabilities may have various levels of difficulties in social, cognitive, and emotional skills, and problems in physical well-being. However, the results of the studies investigating the effects of preschool inclusion appear to be promising regarding the developmental outcomes of children with disabilities. In this presentation, I will share the results of the Preschool Inclusion Project aiming to determine both the developmental outcomes of inclusive preschools and predictors of developmental gains of the children with disabilities.

In Turkey, inclusion is accepted as being a service model for children with developmental disabilities. It is mandatory that all needs of young CWD must be met in public and private preschools, through the provision of the necessary support services. Although research focusing on the aspects of inclusive practices accelerated in the last decades; there is currently a lack of research addressing what extent inclusive preschools in Turkey support the development of children with disabilities and typically developing children. Therefore, to analyze the effects of inclusive preschools in the development of children with disabilities and their typically developing peers, The Preschools Inclusion Project, a longitudinal study, was started in 2015.

Data addressing the social skills, problem behaviors, school adjustment, student-teacher relationship, home environment and the developmental functions of children with and without disabilities were collected from the mothers and teachers, while trained assistants assessed the children's development. Analyses indicated that although all children made developmental gains; psychomotor, language and socioemotional developmental gains were greater for children with disabilities than those of the typically developing children. Social skills and school adjustment were found to be significant predictors of developmental gains of children with disabilities. Implications of these findings will be discussed in terms of the importance of a rich environment for the development of children with disabilities, in that there were children with skills at different levels.

[Global Summit on Advances in Pediatrics and Pediatric Neurology](#) | Paris, France | February 19-20, 2020

Citation: Bulbin Sucuoğlu, The effects of the inclusive environment on the development of young children with disabilities, *Pediatric Neurology* 2020: Global Summit on Advances in Pediatrics and Pediatric Neurology, Paris, 19-20 February 2020, pp: 04