Examining the Competencies of Special Education Teacher Candidates and Graduates Regarding Neurodiversity and Inclusive Education in the Context of the Curriculum: A Case Study

Necdet Tuna Sahsuvaroglu
Ataturk Faculty of Education, Department of Special Education, Marmara University, Istanbul, Turkey

Abstract

Neurodiversity refers to individuals' different ways of learning, thinking, and processing information, while inclusive education aims to provide equal educational opportunities for all students by respecting their differences. Teachers' mastery of these approaches is critical for students' effective participation in the educational process. This study is a qualitative case study examining the views of special education teacher candidates and graduates studying at a state university in Turkey. Data collection tools included a demographic information form, semi-structured interviews, and curriculum document analysis, and the data were evaluated using thematic and descriptive analysis. The findings indicate that participants have a basic awareness of neurodiversity and inclusivity, but there are deficiencies in application examples, instructional adaptations, and psychopedagogical interventions. The curriculum focuses on theoretical knowledge and does not comprehensively address inclusive practices for individuals with neurodiversity. It is necessary to structure the special education teacher training curriculum in a way that strengthens inclusive competencies from a neurodiversity perspective. Additionally, increasing practical experience and instructional adaptations can enhance teacher candidates' effectiveness in inclusive education practices.