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An Examination into Teaching Experiences of Contract Teachers Teaching Individuals with Special Needs

Caner Kasap¹, Hamdi Gönültaş²

¹ Special Education Department, Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Karaman, Turkey

² Special Education Department, Anadolu University, Eskişehir, Turkey

Correspondence: Caner Kasap, Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University, Faculty of Education, Karaman, Turkey, 70100. Tel: +90 338 226 20 00 / 5210. E-mail: canerkasapov@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aimed to examine the experiences of contract teachers teaching students with special needs. To achieve this goal, this descriptive research was designed within the framework of the qualitative research paradigm. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten contract teachers. None of the participants had a bachelor's degree in special education. Besides, participants were graduates of departments such as sociology, sports management, and pre-school teaching. The students with special needs had an intellectual disability and an autism spectrum disorder. To determine the experiences of contract teachers, the data collected in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 academic year was analyzed via content analysis. Findings indicated that contract teachers were professionally inadequate. To eliminate these inadequacies, contract teachers tried to develop themselves by getting support from permanent teachers, reading books, and researching on the internet.

Keywords: Contract Teachers, Students with Special Needs, Experience

1. Introduction

Regarding the approaches to teacher education, mainly two main perspectives emerge throughout the world. The first one is pre-service education provided to individuals who are trained to become teachers, and the other is in-service education (Işık, Ciltaş, & Baş, 2010). Pre-service education refers to the training provided in undergraduate programs of faculties of education at universities. In-service education, on the other hand, aims to improve qualifications of in-service teachers in the process of gaining students the target behaviors. In both approaches, the aim is to provide more effective education to make teachers more qualified (Abazaoglu, Yıldırım, & Yıldızhan, 2016; Abazaoglu, 2014; Demirel & Budak, 2003). Teacher education in Turkey progresses in all branches, as it is in the rest of the world. In Turkey, since the 2000s, teacher training undergraduate programs have been progressing in line with the common program determined by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), which is responsible for the operations of universities. In this context, the expectations of YÖK regarding the competencies that teachers should have are as follows: (a) teachers' dedication to their students and students' learning, (b) technological pedagogical content knowledge, (c) instructional planning and implementation, (d) evaluation and monitoring, (e) effective communication in the teaching-learning environment and managing student behavior, (f) planning and

realizing individual and professional development, (g) teamwork and cooperation, (i) knowing and understanding the legislation related to their professional duties and work (YÖK, 2011; TED, 2009).

The expectations and critiques regarding the competencies of today's teachers are gathered around the abilities such as problem solving, critical thinking, creative thinking, thinking in line with scientific processes, leadership skills, communication skills, and being an entrepreneur. Teacher education systems aim to train teachers equipped with these competencies (Akdemir, 2013; Ananiadou & Claro, 2009; Oktik, 2007; Levin, 2001). In Turkey, the process is similar when training special education teachers. Although Special Education Teaching in Turkey dates back to the end of the 1800s, the first systematic teacher education initiatives started in the 1950s. The realization of the Gazi Education Institute special education can be considered as the beginning of systematic special education. In 1965, the Department of Special Education was established at Ankara University. With the establishment of YÖK in 1982, it was included in the Psychological Services in Education. Special Education Teaching, which was founded at the Anadolu University in 1983, had its first graduates in 1987. At first, those who graduated this program were identified as graduates of Special Education Teaching; however, in the 1990s, it started to graduate teachers in two different departments as the Mentally Disabled Teacher Education and Hearing-Impaired Education (Kargın, 2003; Şenel, 1998). Teacher training programs in the field of special education continued as an undergraduate program of teaching the mentally, hearing, and visually impaired until 2014. Teachers who graduated from these fields worked in the schools of the Ministry of National Education (MEB), where mentally, hearing, and visually impaired children receive education, in line with their branches. However, a new application was introduced with the amendment published in the Journal of Announcements of the Ministry of National Education numbered 2678: *“If the need for a teacher in the field of Special Education is not met by the graduates of the related undergraduate program, those who have a teaching degree are appointed if they have a master's or doctorate with/without a thesis in the field of special education (Visual, Hearing and Mentally Impaired).”* (MEB, 2014). Also, in some case (e.g., not having enough special education teachers; special reasons such as health, birth; insufficient teacher appointments), MEB has implemented other practices under the control of provincial directorates. Contract teachers are assigned to schools within these conditions. First of all, contract teachers are assigned considering the relevant branch. Then, teachers from different branches are also assigned as contract teachers if needed.

Based on Article 4 of the Civil Servants Law No. 657, teachers can be employed in different ways. Accordingly, teachers can work on a permanent or contract basis. However, according to article 89 of the same law, if there are not enough teachers with relevant qualifications in institutions, contract teachers are employed, who are paid for the hours they teach (Civil Servants Law No. 657, article 4 and article 89).

Studies on contract teachers have aimed to determine the problems experienced by contract teachers and to evaluate the contract teaching system. For example, Bayram (2009) argued that contract teachers had problems due to the lack of job guarantees and low salaries. In addition, contract teachers might experience problems in their relations with permanent teachers and parents. Bilgiç and Ekinçi (2020) found that contract teachers had psychological, economic, managerial and social problems. Besides, the research reported that contract teachers had problems regarding unions, personal rights, and group membership (belonging). In a study conducted by Doğan, Demir, and Turan (2013), all contract teachers working at different levels opposed the contract teaching system, but they accepted contract teaching due to economic concerns. Şentürk (2017) found that the organizational commitment of contract teachers was at a low level, which might cause negative outcomes in terms of education. In addition, he suggested that activities should be carried out to increase the organizational commitment of contract teachers. Regarding the literature, it can be said that contract teachers have problems in terms of personal rights, they have inadequate teaching content knowledge, but they accepted contract teaching due to financial problems (Bayram, 2009; Bilgiç & Ekinçi, 2020; Doğan, Demir & Turan, 2013; Sentürk, 2017). A study examining the views of contract teachers about students with special needs (Alaybay, 2021) acknowledged that contract teachers had deficiencies in the field of special education as well as in the context of practical experience. This study aimed to contribute to the literature by expanding the research findings. Accordingly, the aim was to shed light on the contract teaching status of contract teachers teaching students with special needs by determining their teaching experiences and to support these teachers.

The purpose of this research was to examine the teaching experiences of contract teachers teaching individuals with special needs. Accordingly, the following question was asked: “What are the experiences of contract teachers teaching students with special needs?” The answers are explained in the following section.

2. Method

This study aimed to examine the experiences of contract teachers who teach students with special needs. Therefore, the study was designed as descriptive research within the framework of the qualitative research paradigm. In qualitative research, data collection techniques include interviews, observations, and document analysis. The aim is to reveal the perceptions, thoughts, and existing events of the participants realistically and holistically. Besides, based on the data, the existing situation and phenomenon are evaluated according to the conditions they are in (Cresswell, 2016; Mills & Gay, 2016; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In this study, the data were collected from contract teachers working in a small-scale city located in the Central Anatolian Region of Turkey. Findings were handled within the framework of the qualitative paradigm due to the nature of the research.

2.1 Participants

Participants were contract teachers working in a small-scale city located in the Central Anatolian Region of Turkey. The participants’ names were kept confidential. Table 1 presents information about participants’ age, gender, the university and program, and the number of students with special needs in their classes as well as the types of special needs of these students.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Contract Teachers

Code Number	Code Name	Age/Gender	University Graduated	Program Graduated	Types of special needs	Number
1.	Adile	25/F	9 Eylül	Pre-school teaching	Autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, hearing impairment	5
2.	Derya	26/F	Hacettepe	Family and consumer sciences	Autism spectrum disorder	3
3.	Cemre	26/F	Erzincan	Psychological counseling and guidance	Intellectual disability	7
4.	Deniz	25/F	Afyon Kocatepe	Pre-school teaching	Autism spectrum disorder	3
5.	Cansu	29/F	Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey	Sports management	Intellectual disability	5
6.	Yasemin	28/F	Necmettin Erbakan	Psychological counseling and guidance	Intellectual disability	5
7.	Ece	29/F	Kırıkkale	Sociology	Autism spectrum disorder	2
8.	Emre	28/M	Niğde	Social studies teaching	Intellectual disability	4
9.	Asuman	29/F	Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey	Department of Physical education	Intellectual disability	4
10.	Gönül	24/F	Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey	Islamic sciences	Autism spectrum disorder	1

Note: *F=Female, M=Male*

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

“Semi-structured Interview Questions” were prepared by both authors in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. The questions were sent to two experts (academicians) in the field of special education and qualitative research methods. Based on their feedback, the questions were finalized. Table 2 presents semi-structured interview questions.

Table 2: Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. What do special needs mean to you? What do you know about students with special needs?
2. What did you experience when you met your student with special needs for the first time?
3. When you met your student with special needs for the first time, what did you know about your student's needs?
4. What methods did you do to learn about the needs of your student with special needs?
5. What were the activities you did for your student with special needs during the education process? How would you rate these activities in terms of ease and difficulty?
6. In which subject(s) did you have difficulties regarding your student with special needs during the education process? Can you give examples?
7. What do you think about the situation of your student with special needs in the classroom? How did this student get along with other students? How was this student's participation in the classes?
8. How was a routine day for your student with special needs as you observed?
9. Do you want to be a teacher in a classroom having students with special needs in the future? Why/why not?
10. Is there any other opinion you would like to add on the subject?

Data were collected through the interview questions in Table 2. The data were collected from teachers working in a small-scale city in the Central Anatolian Region of Turkey during the fall semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. Demographic information of these teachers was presented in Table 1. Before the interviews, legal permission was obtained from the scientific research and publication ethics committee of the university where the first author works.

To determine the participants, the administrators of the special education schools in the province where the first author works were reached. School administrators were informed about the research, and they were requested to ask contract teachers whether they were willing to participate in the study. Accordingly, the volunteer contract teachers were recruited.

Participants were interviewed to determine the appropriate days and times. Then, semi-structured interviews were conducted between 30.12.2021 and 11.01.2022. All participants were interviewed in the teachers' room of the school where they work and in private. Before the interview, a consent form was read and signed by each participant. In addition, the participants were informed that the interviews would be recorded.

The interviews were transcribed by the second author. Then, the texts were checked by listening to the audio recordings again. The first author ensured the reliability of the transcripts. In other words, the first author checked the transcripts and listened to the audio recordings to correct the incorrect or missing spellings.

Interviews were listened to three times by the authors to manage the data. Content analysis was applied for analyzing the data. The data obtained from the content analysis are coded by the researcher/s. These codes contribute to the creation of sub-themes and themes in the later process. In addition, direct analyzes are included to reflect the views of the participants (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018). In this study, the authors read the interview transcripts and coded the data independently. They created sub-themes and themes independently based on codes. Then, they came together and discussed their codes, sub-themes, and themes. After this discussion, the authors reached a consensus on the themes, sub-themes and codes given in Table 3.

2.3 Research Ethics

The basic ethical rules in scientific research are voluntary basis, consent, respect for confidentiality, respect for privacy, beneficence/do not harm, and avoiding deception (Yıldırım & Şimsek, 2018). Accordingly, the following rules were considered during the research process: (a) The research process was presented clearly and understandably, and the necessary permissions were obtained from the relevant institutions and organizations, both written and verbally, (b) both written and verbal permissions were obtained from the relevant institutions and organizations, (c) a consent form was read and signed by each participant, (d) participants were told that they could withdraw from the research at any stage of the research, and (e) all individuals and institutions were given code names.

3. Results

The aim of this study was to examine the experiences of contract teachers who teach students with special needs. The data were collected in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 academic year, as explained in the title of "Data Collection and Analysis." Semi-structured interviews lasted 2 hours, 58 minutes, and 16 seconds in total. The longest interview was held with Emre (30 minutes and 9 seconds). The shortest meeting was recorded as 10 minutes with Yasemin. The average interview time was calculated as 17 minutes and 16 seconds. The transcripts of the interviews were determined as 44 pages in total.

The themes, sub-themes and codes are presented in Table 3. As seen in Table 3, there were themes: a) contract teachers' knowledge and views about individuals with special needs, b) contract teachers' experiences at school, and c) their views on contract teaching experience in the field of special education. These themes consisted of a total of nine sub-themes and 35 codes.

Table 3: Themes, sub-themes and codes

1. Contract teachers' knowledge and views about individuals with special needs
1.1. Contract teachers' views about individuals with special needs
1.1.1. Fall behind their peers
1.2.1. Needing special support
1.2. Contract teachers' feelings about when they meet a student with special needs for the first time
1.2.1. Excitement
1.2.2. Astonishment
1.2.3. Fear
1.2.4. Having difficulty
1.3. Contract teachers' knowledge and views about individuals with special needs at the beginning of the implementation process
1.3.1. Characteristics of individuals with special needs
1.3.2. Lack of knowledge
1.4. How contract teachers get information about individuals with special needs
1.4.1. Getting information from academics
1.4.2. Searching on the internet
1.4.3. Getting information from permanent teachers
1.4.4. Getting information from books
1.4.5. Getting information from parents
1.4.6. Attending seminars
1.5. Contract teachers' views on teaching individuals with special needs in the future
1.5.1. Positive
1.5.2. Indecisive
2. Contract teachers' experiences at school
2.1. Issues that contract teachers have difficulties
2.1.1. Communicating with families
2.1.2. Teaching toilet skills
2.1.3. Behavior management
2.1.4. Planning the instruction
2.1.5. Teaching academic skills

- 2.2. Activities easily performed by contract teachers
 - 2.2.1. Material design
 - 2.2.2. Teaching academic skills
 - 2.2.3. Behavior management
 - 2.2.4. Communicating with students
 3. Contract teachers' views on contract teaching experience in the field of special education
 - 3.1. Negative views
 - 3.1.1. Teaching more severe students
 - 3.1.2. Not being appreciated by managers
 - 3.1.3. Mobbing by administrators
 - 3.1.4. Being threatened by parents
 - 3.1.5. Experiencing burnout
 - 3.1.6. Working out of necessity
 - 3.1.7. Having a low salary
 - 3.2. Positive views
 - 3.2.1. Loving his/her job
 - 3.2.2. Working voluntarily
-

Contract teachers were asked to explain what comes to mind regarding the term 'individuals with special needs.' Adile, Deniz, Cansu, Ece and Asuman answered this question as individuals falling behind their peers. For example, Adile said, "*Students who fall behind their peers, fall behind in areas such as academic skills and daily life skills, and cannot adapt to them...*" According to Derya, Cemre, Yasemin, Emre and Gönül, individuals with special needs are those who need special support. For instance, Derya said, "*It refers to individuals who cannot follow the existing central program and need special plans and individual education plans. Individuals with special needs are divided into autism spectrum disorder, down syndrome, and intellectual disability, and they all have different needs. I can define them as individuals who need to participate in daily life and make various academic adjustments.*"

Contract teachers explained how they felt when meeting individuals with special needs for the first time. They experienced various emotions such as excitement, astonishment, fear, ignorance and having difficulty. Expressing his feeling of excitement, Emre said, "*Sir, I was excited at first. We entered a different environment and encountered a different cultural structure.*" Adile, Asuman, and Gönül felt astonished. Asuman stated, "*Sir, for example, on the first day, students cursed me, so to speak. Since I had never known such children before, I stopped and looked. I felt out of place. I was astonished as there were students spitting and swearing in my face.*" Some of the contract teachers teaching students with special needs for the first time said that they had experienced the feeling of fear. These teachers were Cemre, Ece and Emre. Cemre said, "*I remember. I will never forget the day I started school for the first time. I met students with special needs for the first time. There was no student with special needs I knew or was close to before. There was fear at first because I didn't quite know what to do.*" Deniz explained his sense of ignorance: "*I took a course on special education when I was at university. But this lesson was not detailed. When I started working with these students, I felt like a fish out of water. I learned a lot of things here. There is no special education in our university. At least the course taught at my university and the practice here are completely different things.*" Cansu and Yasemin also expressed similar feelings.

Regarding the knowledge of participants about individuals with special needs when they started their teaching experience, Adile, Cemre and Yasemin said that they had basic knowledge about the characteristics of individuals with special needs, while other teachers said that they did not know anything. Yasemin said, "*I took a course on special education when I was at university because I graduated from psychological counseling and guidance. I was aware of the characteristics of individuals with special needs.*". Expressing that she had no knowledge of individuals with special needs when she first started teaching, Cansu said: "*When I first started teaching, I didn't know anything about individuals with special needs.*"

Regarding how contract teachers got information about individuals with special needs, many teachers (Derya, Cemre, Deniz, Cansu, Yasemin, Ece and Gönül) received information from permanent teachers. For example, Ece said, "*I got information from two teachers: school counselor and special education teacher... They helped a lot*

when I came to this school. Since I had never worked with students with severe disabilities before, I did not know about them. They supported me a lot in this regard.” Some teachers (Derya, Deniz, Cansu, Asuman and Gönül) searched on the internet. For instance, Gönül expressed, “There are web pages of institutions working on special education. I followed them. I examined how they make students do activities and how they make students behave. I generally searched on the internet, sir.” Besides, Cansu, Ece and Asuman said that they attended seminars on special education in the city. At this point, Asuman said, “Experts from an autism-related foundation came to our school to provide education. We attended their training. I follow them.” Cemre and Emre benefited from the books, while Adile and Emre received information from academicians in the field of special education. Deniz got support from a knowledgeable parent: “I don't know what to do with a severely autistic student without enough knowledge. I was asking a parent, Ms. Ayşe: what should I do? What do people do in the rehabilitation center? What did their previous teachers do? How did they work?... I always asked the parent about these issues.”

Participants were asked whether they would like to teach individuals with special needs again in the future. Cemre, Deniz, Cansu, Emre, Asuman and Gönül were optimistic. For example, Cemre said, “I would love to teach students with special needs, and to combine special education with the psychological counseling and guidance. It would be really nice for me.” However, some teachers (Adile, Derya, Yasemin and Ece) were indecisive. Yasemin said, “I am not completely pessimist. When I work in special education... Although it is difficult, there is a challenge in every profession. We can overcome these difficulties by consulting and getting information. Each new day is different from the previous day. We are more open to innovation, so I can do it, I see this power in myself. But sometimes I say no. It requires a lot of patience. Your energy decreases. I guess I am indecisive.”

For participants' experiences at school, they underlined the issues they had difficulty with and the activities they easily performed. Behavior management is one of the most common issues that contract teachers have difficulty in teaching individuals with special needs. Derya, Cemre, Cansu, Yasemin, Ece, Asuman and Gönül stated that they had difficulties in managing behaviors of individuals with special needs. Cansu said, “I have serious difficulties in correcting the child's behavior.” Deniz and Ece had difficulties in planning the teaching. In this regard, Deniz drew attention to the problem he experienced in planning teaching: “I have difficulty in finding out what the student needs to do and making a plan... What does the student need?... For example, a student has a problem behavior and I should sort it out, but how should I do it?... I have difficulty with such issues.” Cansu and Ece had problems in teaching academic skills. On this subject, Ece said, “I was having difficulties in working on teaching academic skills and progressing.” On the other hand, some teachers (Adile and Emre) had problems regarding communicating with the families of students with special needs. For example, Adile said, “I have difficulty with an issue: communicating with families... Parents in special education are very different. I have trouble communicating with them.” Besides, Adile stated that she had problems in helping students with special needs to gain toilet skills.

Contract teachers explained the activities they easily performed while teaching students with special needs. Among the activities that contract teachers could easily perform were material design, teaching academic skills, behavior management, and communicating with students. Adile, Deniz and Cansu underlined that they easily realized the material design. For example, Adile explained, “I did not have any problems regarding material design. When I was at university, we used to design materials in the teaching methods course and adapt them according to individuals with special needs. I can say that I improved myself in material design in that course.” Similarly, Adile and Yasemin stated that they did not have any difficulties in teaching academic skills and that they enabled students to easily acquire these skills. For instance, Yasemin said, “Reading, writing, maths, or Turkish... If I am going to teach counting by 10, I can teach it by preparing activities in different ways. I can easily do this.” In addition, Cemre and Yasemin stated that they could easily communicate with students. In this regard, Yasemin said, “Working with the current group is easier compared to the autism group I worked with before. That's why I can communicate with them and establish a dialogue.” Finally, Derya stated that she could easily manage behaviors when teaching individuals with special needs: “I can perform behavior management most easily. Because certain techniques really work for these students.”

Participants expressed opinions about their experience of teaching as a contract teacher in the field of special education. They provided both positive and negative views. Adile discussed her views under two headings:

teaching more severe students and not being appreciated by the administrators. She said, *“Higher level students are given to permanent teachers, but students with more severe disabilities are given to contract teachers. I think this is a very wrong practice.”* Besides, stated complained about not being appreciated by her administrators: *“It is clear what a teacher does. The teacher designs materials and teaches in the classroom. However, this situation is not noticed and appreciated by the managers.”* Gönül voiced that she was mobbed by her managers: *“I had a lot of difficulties in this process for two reasons: I am not a graduate of the field, and I was mobbed by my administrators at school. This situation still exists.”* Deniz said that she was threatened by the parents: *“I never forget. A parent whose son couldn't speak came to class. Before the child was diagnosed with autism, he had a six-month hospital experience. The parent threatened: I had the chief physician and three doctors fired. If you don't take good care of my child, I will get you fired too. You are already a contract teacher...”* As an example of negative opinions was Yasemin teacher's feeling of burnout: *“I am experiencing burnout. Because I worked with children with autism for the first two years. Also, it is not easy to work in this school.”* Ece said that she was working out of necessity: *“Sir, I have been here for five years, but this happened against my will. If I could, I would work in my own field.”* Finally, Asuman underlined low salary by saying, *“We have a low salary, as you know. You know, too, the wage of contract teachers is really very low.”*

Contract teachers expressed positive views regarding their experiences while teaching individuals with special needs. Derya and Asuman said that they were satisfied with their work. For example, Derya said, *“I am satisfied with the work I do. The special education group is more disadvantaged. I am satisfied with the feeling of being useful to them. I feel useful.”* Cansu also stated that she worked voluntarily as a contract teacher, which was a positive situation for her. *“Working here is actually voluntarily. I don't do for financial concerns. After all, it is important for me to teach those kids to even hold a pencil.”*

4. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation

The study aimed to examine the teaching experiences of contract teachers teaching individuals with special needs. Five teachers stated that those individuals fell behind their peers, while others (n=5) underlined the need for special support. If these findings were compared with Alaybay's (2021) research, contract teachers expressed both positive and negative aspects of students with special needs. A negative aspect was that students fell behind their peers in some areas such as attention span. In this study, the participants also stated that individuals with special needs fell behind their peers. In addition, teachers stated that individuals needed special support. This means that they had a broader perspective, considering that special needs do not only consist of individuals with developmental delays but also include gifted individuals who are above the norm.

Regarding the emotions of participants when teaching individuals with special needs for the first time, they experienced excitement, astonishment, fear, and having difficulty. It can be said that they experienced mostly negative emotions. It can be stated that this situation arises from the ignorance of the participants about special education and individuals with special needs. In this regard, what contract teachers know about individuals with special needs when teaching them for the first time should be considered. Accordingly, most of the participants (n=7) stated that they did not know anything. This means contract teaching practice is not based on field proficiency, contract teachers are ignorant about individuals with special needs, and when contract teachers start work, they are unaware of individuals with special needs and the training to be offered to these individuals. Table 3 indicates that the professional inadequacy is due to the contract teachers who are not graduated from the faculty of education. Similarly, Çınkır and Kurum (2015) found that contract teachers (who did not graduate from special education) had inadequacies in terms of various variables such as professional knowledge, belonging, job satisfaction, and motivation. At this point, it can be interpreted that contract teachers should be provided with theoretical and applied knowledge in cases where contract teaching practice is required. This suggestion confirms Alaybay (2021).

Bilgiç and Ekinçi (2020) argued that contract teachers had problems with group belonging. However, most of the participants (n=7) of this study were found knowledgeable about special education thanks to their permanent colleagues. This is significant to highlight the cooperation of permanent teachers and contract teachers. Besides, contract teachers benefitted from academicians, books, and parents, and they also attended seminars on special

education. Although contract teachers were not given direct seminars about the field, they tried to get information about the subject on their own. Özyürek (2008) stated that seminars on special education were given to teachers who were later included in the field of special education and whose undergraduate degrees were from different branches. Teachers of different branches said that they benefited from the seminars they received on special education. At this point, as Özyürek (2008) mentioned, contract teachers individuals with special needs should be given theoretical and practical in-service seminars on special education.

Contract teachers expressed different views regarding whether they would teach individuals with special needs in the future. Six teachers were optimists, but four teachers were indecisive. The reasons for being indecisive were burnout and willingness to work in their own field. This confirms the findings of Çinkır and Kurum (2015). However, some teachers expressed their desire to work with those individuals in the future. This may be due to their moral motivation or the challenges of their previous jobs. At this point, one of the participants, Ece, stated that she was doing this job because she had to.

Regarding activities they did easily or with difficulty, most of the contract teachers (n=7) had difficulties in behavior management. In addition, they had difficulties in areas such as planning instruction (n=2), teaching academic skills (n=2), communicating with families (n=2), and teaching toilet skills. Therefore, it can be stated that contract teachers had professional inadequacies. This coincides with Özyürek (2008) and Çinkır and Kurum (2015). However, some teachers voiced that they worked easily on material design (n=3), teaching academic skills (n=2), communicating with students (n=2), and behavior management (2). This may be because those teachers took material design courses at the undergraduate level and developed themselves professionally as a result of their individual research after starting the profession.

Participants were asked for their opinions about contract teaching in the field of special education. They expressed both positive and negative opinions. Negative opinions were being forced to teach students with special needs at a severe level, not being appreciated by their administrators, being exposed to mobbing, being threatened by parents, burnout, working out of necessity, and getting low salaries. These findings confirm the literature (Bayram, 2009; Bilgiç & Ekinçi, 2020; Doğan, Demir & Turan, 2013; Şentürk, 2017). Thus, it can be interpreted that the professional conditions of contract teachers should be improved, and they should be provided with theoretical and practical training. Also, some teachers (n=2) were satisfied with their job and performed their teaching voluntarily (n=1).

As a result, this research indicates that contract teachers are professionally inadequate. To overcome this problem, contract teachers get support from permanent teachers, read books, and search on the internet. Thus, it can be said that the government should support contract teachers teaching individuals with special needs through theoretical and practical in-service training on special education. In addition, contract teachers complain about being mistreated by school administrators and students' parents, burnout, doing this job out of necessity, and low salary. It can be suggested that legal arrangements are needed to overcome these negativities. Finally, contract teaching is due to the inadequacy in the number of teachers who are graduates of the field. The government implements this practice due to the lack of teachers who graduated from special education. Therefore, it is thought that paid teaching will continue until there are enough field teachers. However, efforts should be spent regarding how to improve the existing situation of these teachers.

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