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## Comparative Analysis of Iranian and Turkish Special Education in Terms of Aims and Principles

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## Comparative Analysis of Iranian and Turkish Special Education in Terms of Aims and Principles

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### Abstract

Comparative education is very important in terms of addressing the similarities, differences, interactions, and interaction levels of education systems. In comparative education studies the similarities and differences between the education systems implemented by the countries under consideration are investigated and presented within the framework of certain criteria. This study aims to compare Iranian and Turkish special education systems in terms of aims and principles. In the study, a qualitative study based on the document/document analysis method is adopted to compare the special education principles of the two countries. In this study, which focuses on the aims and principles of special education in Turkey and Iran, the data were collected using the relevant laws, regulations, legislation, theses, books, articles, publications, and websites of ministries and institutions. The obtained data were analyzed by descriptive analysis method in terms of similarities and differences in accordance with document analysis in comparative education. According to the results, Iran and Turkey have a similar general purpose in special education: to prepare the individual for society and the future. The main purpose of special education is to meet the educational needs of individuals with special needs. While the Turkish special education approach is more family-oriented and cares about the child's environment, the Iranian special education approach focuses on the individual in need of special education.

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### Introduction

Educational institutions are at the forefront of institutions that sustain a society and ensure its progress. The education system changes according to each society's socio-economic and other characteristics. Countries determine their education systems in accordance with the profile of the individual they aim to raise. The education system serves the values of the society in which it is located and aims to raise individuals under the values of that society. For this reason, every country has its education system and education programs. Comparative education has emerged to show these educational differences between countries and offer an alternative education system for countries that want to change the education system (Phillips, 2006; Trethewey, 2014).

Comparative education is very important in terms of addressing the similarities, differences, interactions, and

interaction levels of education systems. Considering a country's education system only with its internal dynamics will undoubtedly ensure that some data will be revealed. However, it will be incomplete to settle for only internal dynamics. Comparative education plays a very functional role to eliminate this deficiency. Comparative education enables countries to act with a broad perspective while analyzing educational facts in various countries and looking for solutions to their educational problems. One of the main objectives of comparative education is to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the educational policies to be created by examining the development and current situation of the elements affecting education in various countries (Bray, Adamson, & Mason 2014).

Countries have started to research and compare the education system implemented by other countries in order to improve their education systems and get more efficiency from the education system. While doing comparative education, the education in question should be evaluated according to the characteristics of the society in which it is located. If it is evaluated by considering the country's socio-economic, cultural, and religious beliefs and traditions, more reliable information can be obtained. One or more countries can be considered in comparative education.

The similarities and differences between the education systems implemented by the countries under consideration are investigated and presented within the framework of certain criteria (Cowen, & Kazamias, 2009). Every country in the world has its own education system. However, when structuring or reforming their education systems, countries need to consider not only their own social realities or goals but also the educational goals and expectations of other countries in the world. In order to meet this need and have a more advanced and forward-looking education system compared to other countries, each country should consider its own education system and the education systems of other countries with a comparative approach at the national and international levels (Cowen, & Kazamias, 2009; Xacahoba, 2020).

Comparative education is a vast field of study. It does not only study other countries' educational systems or confine itself to a single, strict definition because it covers disciplines such as the sociology, political science, psychology, and anthropology of different countries. Comparative education is a detailed study of educational systems to determine how people's values and beliefs affect their educational system and provide a suitable education. The field is a deep, critical examination of other countries' societal values and educational systems to evaluate one's system and refresh one's own culture by adopting progressive aspects from elsewhere based on the comparison (Dolby & Rahman, 2008; Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2014). Comparative education is a comparative study of educational theories and practices in various countries. Comparative education attempts to use cross-national data to test propositions about the relationship between education and society and between teaching practices and learning outcomes. Therefore, Comparative Education should be regarded as a discipline that is primarily related to different fields such as educational administration, education history, education economics, and curriculum development in education.

Comparative education is a field that analyzes educational facts in various countries and enables countries to act from a broad perspective while seeking solutions to their own educational problems. One of the main purposes of

comparative education is to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the education policies to be formed by examining the development and current situation of the factors affecting education in various countries. Carrying out research that includes comparative approaches to the education systems of the two countries according to scientific criteria contributes to determining the countries' education policies. Although Turkey and Iran are governed by different political regimes, there are similarities in the structure and objectives of their education systems (Özlük, 2017).

In the history of Turkish and Iran education, there have been efforts for renewal at different intervals for many years. In this process, it was emphasized how the problems in education were solved in different countries, especially neighboring countries. In this context, comparative education, which examines the basic dynamics of education systems in all its dimensions and examines the educational experiences of countries, can contribute to the fact that the innovations to be made in the education system by making use of the experiences of other countries can be more controlled and based. One of the least known things about other countries is how they train their human resources, that is, what kind of education system they have regarding aims and principles. The comparative education field can make important contributions to the education systems. Turkey and Iran are two neighboring countries with intense relations, but their education systems are not sufficiently known. This study aims to identify and analyze the similarities and differences between the special education aims and principles of the education systems of Turkey and Iran.

## **Method**

This study is a qualitative study based on document/document analysis. The document analysis method includes the analysis of written and printed documents related to the subjects to be studied, which are used to reach the sources for the purpose of the research and to determine the data to be obtained. Document analysis is a qualitative research method used to rigorously and systematically analyze the content of written documents. Document analysis is a systematic method used to examine and evaluate all documents, both printed and electronic materials. Like other methods used in qualitative research, document analysis requires the examination and interpretation of data in order to make sense of it, form an understanding of the relevant topic, and develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009; Yıldırım, & Şimşek, 2016).

There are several comparative education approaches mainly categorized as the Descriptive method, Historical method, Psychological method, Social approach, Quantitative statistical approach, and Scientific approach. In other words, in the horizontal approach, all the elements of the education systems are examined together with all the variables of the period in question in order to determine the differences between the education systems. In this context, the solutions may be similar, as the problems belong to the same period and are therefore contemporary. In this study, which compares the aims and principles of Iranian and Turkish special education descriptive method is adopted. A descriptive model is a research approach that aims to describe a past or present situation as it is (Bray, Adamson, & Mason 2014; Phillips, 2006; Trethewey, 2014). The researchers sought to access documents and data related to the aims and principles of Iranian and Turkish special education directly from the original Persian and Turkish texts.

## **Data Collection**

Documents contain recorded texts and pictures without the intervention of a researcher. Types of documents that can be used in research; advertisements, agendas, attendance records, invitations, meeting minutes, guides, notes, books and brochures, diaries, journals, program records, letters, memoranda, maps, charts, newspapers, artworks, program details, radio TV program scripts, organizational reports, survey data, various public records, notebooks, photo albums, laws and regulations. They provide data to researchers for use in research. In this study, which focuses on the aims and principles of special education in Turkey and Iran, the data were collected using the relevant laws, regulations, legislation, theses, books, articles, publications, and websites of ministries and institutions.

## **Data Analysis**

The researchers analyzed the Persian and Turkish sources in this study and translated them into English. The obtained data were analyzed by descriptive analysis method in terms of similarities and differences in accordance with document analysis in comparative education. The data obtained are summarized and interpreted according to predetermined themes. The data is organized according to the themes revealed by the research questions. The purpose of adopting descriptive analysis is to present the findings to the reader in an organized and interpreted form. The data obtained for this purpose are first described in a systematic and clear way. Afterward, these descriptions are explained and interpreted, cause-effect relationships are examined, and some results are explained.

## **Results**

### **Purpose of Turkish Special Education**

The general purpose of education is to prepare the individual for society and the future. Special education aims to develop students' existing potential and abilities. In addition, it includes interventions to prevent a deficiency from turning into a disability. For this reason, it can be said that the main purpose of special education is to meet the educational needs of individuals with special needs. In the sixth article of the Special Education Services Regulation (2018), the purpose of special education services is stated as "Based on the general purpose and basic principles of Turkish National Education; It aims to enable individuals with special education needs to use their capacities at the highest level in line with their educational needs, competencies, interests, and abilities, and to prepare them for higher education, professional life, and social life" (Ministry of National Education [MEB], 2018; 2006; 2000; Resmî Gazete, 1997).

### **Principles of Turkish Special Education**

From a legal point of view, special education prepares the individual with special needs for the next level of education and life taking into account the interests and abilities of the individual. In order to achieve this goal, some basic principles must be followed. In Decree-Law No. 573 on Special Education, the principles of special

education are listed as follows:

- Special education services are utilized for all individuals requiring special education, in line with and to the extent of their interests, desires, competencies, and abilities.
- It is essential to start special education early.
- Special education services are planned and conducted without isolating individuals with special education needs from their social and physical environments as much as possible.
- Considering the educational performance of individuals with special education needs, priority is given to educating them together with other individuals by making adaptations in the purpose, content, and teaching processes.
- Collaboration is made with institutions and organizations that will provide all kinds of rehabilitation in order to continue the education of individuals with special education needs in all types and levels uninterruptedly.
- The development of individualized education plans for individuals with special needs and individualized implementation of training programs are essential.
- It is essential to ensure that families actively participate in all aspects of the special education process.
- In the development of special education policies, the opinions of the organizations of individuals with special education needs are given importance.
- Special education services are planned to cover the interaction and mutual adaptation process of individuals with special education needs with society.

These principles are of great importance for individuals with special needs to receive special education. The potential and ability of each student with special needs should be determined; it should be ensured that they have access to educational services appropriate to their interests, wishes, and characteristics. It is one of the basic principles of special education to identify and support students who cannot catch up with their peers especially in terms of developmental or academic development at an early age (MEB, 2018; 2006; 2000; Resmî Gazete, 1997). Special education services are offered in the closest place to the student's home. It is unacceptable situation for the student to be away from his family or to lose a lot of time for education. It is also unacceptable that individuals with special needs who are prepared for social life receive education separately from society. For this reason, students with special needs should study in the same environment as their peers. However, in addition to this, necessary support should be given to students with special needs through the arrangements made in educational processes and environments. Individuals with special needs may also need an individual program to meet their educational needs. For this reason, an individualized education program should be prepared for each student with special needs. Collaboration with relevant stakeholders is also important in the education of individuals with special needs. In this context, families and non-governmental organizations operating for individuals with special needs should also contribute to the education processes.

### **Purpose of Persian Special Education**

While education is mentioned as the most important pillar of society and the best type of investment in today's world, it has been defined as one of the prominent aspects of growth and development in recent years. Despite the

fact that effective measures in this area started in Iran eighty years ago and success has been achieved in this period, especially in recent years, we have to go a long way in order to make all children benefit from the right to education at the most appropriate level. The first efforts in the field of special education in Iran were initiated by teachers and missionaries in the city of Tabriz in 1920, for the visually impaired children. Cebbar Bahçivan took the first step in the deaf group in 1924 by establishing a school for the deaf in Tabriz. The education and training of children with intellectual deficiencies started in 1949 by civil society in the form of establishing a school on a voluntary basis. In 1968, a department for the education of children and students in need of special education was established in the Ministry of National Education and officially organizes the activities of this department in the form of private schools and classes (Iran Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2019).

The intense and comprehensive interest of the Islamic Republic in the education of children with special needs led to the establishment of a special education organization in 1991, with the legal approval of the Islamic Council, and it covers more goals, tasks, and child groups with wider dimensions. The objectives and duties included in the charter of the Iranian special education organization, which was approved by the Islamic Council in 1991, are as follows:

- To design the education and rehabilitation system in such a way as to eliminate the mental and physical barriers of children and students in need of special education, enabling these students to achieve social and economic success in accordance with their conditions after completing their education.
- To be in a state of constant change and development in order to meet the needs of children and students according to the special conditions of society, taking into account the new methods of special education in Iran and special education in the world.
- According to the special needs of each group, in the education and training of different groups of students in need of special education (preschool, primary education, guidance and secondary education), it is tried to include all children and students, with special emphasis on vocational education.
- To help prevent physical and mental disabilities before, during, and after birth, by raising the level of social awareness about the causes of disability and the characteristics of children in need of special education (Samii, 2014).

### **Principles of Persian Special Education**

New approaches to children with special educational needs in Iran are based on several basic principles and foundations that can be considered the theoretical foundations of operational planning in a special education institution:

- The education of students with special needs is based on rehabilitation. If rehabilitation for people with brain damage and neurological lesions is one of the effective strategies to compensate for and restore lost abilities, it is the basis of education for students with special needs. For example, rehabilitation is one of the necessary measures before and during the sensory education of children with cochlear implants. As another example, tactile training of visually impaired students before the Braille learning process is one of the rehabilitation effects. New rehabilitation approaches and techniques, especially cognitive rehabilitation, are also used during preschool and school education. Techniques to increase the efficiency

of active memory exercises to improve attention and concentration, activities based on control of involuntary behaviors, and activities based on executive functions can be considered as important results of cognitive development in the learning process (Bigdeli, 2000).

- The education system for students with special needs is based on inclusion. Currently, all the efforts of the special education system are to integrate students with special education needs in normal schools. Currently, 64640 students with hearing, visual and physical-motor disabilities are educated in regular schools and inclusion is a big step toward integration.
- Education for children with special educational needs is covered by individualized education (IEP): The individualized integration program, which is compiled as a compulsory law in many countries, is actually the main form of implementation of education and training processes for students with special needs. In other words, it is possible to evaluate the individual education program as the most important element by considering the characteristics, needs, needs and limitations of students with special needs. Educators determine the current performance of students with special education needs, in the form of "IEP", as well as determine the short and long-term goals of the student, achievable goals, and the methods of ensuring the evaluation of the education and rehabilitation services needed. While personalized education programs differ greatly in format, pattern, and details, all of these formats are based on the preparation of a clear, practical, and ethically based document for student education and assessment.
- Teaching students with special educational needs in Iran is based on the use of educational media and modern technologies (MoNE, 2005).

## **Discussion**

It is wrong to classify comparative education as a branch related to any sub-field of Educational Sciences. Because comparative education is an interdisciplinary field that is related to many sub-fields of social sciences besides Educational Sciences. There is a widespread belief that comparative education should be included in curriculum development in education, especially in Turkey. The relationship or affinity of comparative education with curriculum development in education is as much as it is with fields such as educational administration, education history, educational sociology, educational economics, even sociology, economics, and anthropology. Comparative education is among the fields related to the social foundations of education in many universities in the USA, especially in Columbia, Chicago, and Wisconsin (Erdoğan, 2003). However, in the research conducted in the field of comparative education, answers to questions such as how education is managed and financed, how the programs are, and how the historical course of changes in education and education-society relations are, have been sought from an international perspective. In this case, in the classifications made in order to place comparative education in Educational Sciences, the approaches that are expressed as that it is only included in the fields such as program development in education, education history, or education management should be avoided. Çetin et. al. (2017) examined articles and theses that are about comparative education, conducted in 15 years in Turkey in terms of different variables. For this purpose; 128 articles that were published in the last 15 years in national or international journals and 173 theses having the term comparative education in their titles or keywords are examined. It can be seen that until 2009, there have been just a few studies about comparative education. At most, in 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2015 thesis studies were increased. According to the countries that comparison

was made, at most England and Germany with Turkey comparisons were made. Only one study was found comparing Turkey and Iran.

When we compare the Turkish and Iranian Education Systems in terms of structure, while the Ministry of National Education (MEB) is responsible for education in Turkey, the Ministry of Education and Training is responsible in Iran. In both countries, there is a hierarchical structure in which the authorities are concentrated in the center. With excessive hierarchy, chain of command, and the principles of order, it takes a lot of time to solve problems in provincial units and schools. Because everything requires the approval of the center. In addition, the thought is that organizing educational systems with a decentralized "localization in administration" approach will increase functionalism and be more contemporary. Winokur (2014) stated that the Kuwait Ministry of Education has tried to borrow policies on numerous occasions but with little sustainable improvement. To create reform from within the system, guaranteeing the sustainable development of education and improvement of student learning is possible by supporting and growing the mechanisms to gather local data from the schools.

Widely accepted and applied aims and principles of special education are to support students with disabilities and help them succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. Some specific objectives of special education include:

- To provide individualized instruction that meets the unique needs of each student with a disability.
- To help students develop their full academic potential and acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful in life.
- To promote independence, self-sufficiency, and self-esteem in students with disabilities.
- To foster social and emotional growth and support positive behavior and positive self-image.
- To provide access to a full range of educational and vocational opportunities.
- To prepare students for the transition from school to adult life, including post-secondary education and employment.
- To help students with disabilities participate in and contribute to their communities.
- To provide students with disabilities with accommodations, modifications, and support services as needed to ensure their success.
- The objectives of special education are to help students with disabilities overcome barriers to learning and achieve their full potential (Muuya, 2002; Noddings, 2013; Thomas, & Loxley, 2007).

The aims and principles of Iran and Turkey's special education are mainly compatible with current developments worldwide and include the specific objectives mentioned above.

## **Conclusion**

The similarities and differences stand out when comparing the two countries in the context of special education. The general purpose of both countries in special education is to prepare the individual for society and the future. The main purpose of special education is to meet the educational needs of individuals with special needs. The purpose of special education services is stated as "Based on the general purpose and basic principles of National Education". In both countries, priority is given to educating them together with other individuals by making adaptations in the purpose, content, and teaching processes, and also special education services are planned and

conducted with special education needs from their social and physical environments as much as possible.

As for the differences, in Iran, children with special needs are referred to a rehabilitation program before they start their academic education. For example, rehabilitation is one of the necessary measures before and during the sensory education of children with cochlear implants. As another example, tactile training of visually impaired students before the Braille learning process is one of the rehabilitation effects.

It is one of the basic principles of special education in Turkey, to identify and support students who cannot catch up with their peers especially in terms of developmental or academic development at an early age. Special education services are offered in the closest place to the student's home. It is unacceptable situation for the student to be away from his family or to lose a lot of time for education. It is also unacceptable that individuals with special needs who are prepared for social life receive education separately from society. For this reason, students with special needs should study in the same environment as their peers.

It seems that while the Turkish special education approach is more family-oriented, and cares about the environment in which the child lives, the Iranian special education approach focuses on the individual in need of special education. Cultural factors may also be effective in the causes of these different focuses because in Turkish culture family, relatives, environment, and friends are of great importance contrary to Iranian culture. They often don't hesitate to share their problems with them, and understanding help and support is in a stronger position.

In conclusion, when the special education systems of Iran and Turkey are examined in general, there are similarities and differences in the educational activities carried out. This is due to the fact that the two countries have many common features. Turkey-Iran relations are based on strong foundations formed by a common history, culture, and geography. Increasing cooperation regarding special education between Turkey and Iran would be essential for both countries to advance their special education services.

## **Recommendations**

It has been seen that comparative education studies conducted with two countries are quite limited and there are only a few studies. In addition, there is no study comparing the special education services of the two countries. In this context, it is thought that conducting studies with different variables in terms of services offered especially to individuals with special needs will contribute to the development and progress of the two countries in terms of special education services.

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