An investigation into the balance of the school curriculum content for pupils with a visual impairment in Turkey

by

Önder İşlek

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Education
College of Social Sciences
University of Birmingham
September 2016

Abstract

This thesis investigated the educational curriculum experienced by students with visual impairments in Turkey. The study made a distinction between the traditional academic curriculum and the concept of an 'Expanded Core Curriculum' (ECC) which includes a range of disability-specific areas (e.g. Mobility, Braille), and aimed to determine the balance of the curriculum experienced by individuals with visual impairments in Turkey. The study specifically examined the barriers to, and enablers for, an appropriate curriculum balance which would develop individuals' independence. The study made use of an exploratory inductive research approach implementing a cross-sectional research design. Mixed method measures were drawn upon to capture the views of twelve young adults with visual impairments and thirteen educators of children and young adults with visual impairments who had a wide range of schooling and teaching experiences across Turkey. The analysis revealed an emphasis on teaching the academic curriculum with relatively little attention given to ECC. As a consequence, it was found that individuals with visual impairments were not fully prepared to be independent and encountered a number of barriers including: remaining dependent on others; isolation; and psychological challenges in their everyday life. A number of barriers to the teaching of ECC were revealed, including: educational policy priorities in Turkey which give little or no remit to teaching a broader curriculum (teachers were fixed upon teaching the inflexible academic curriculum); little resource is given to specialist teaching support in mainstream schools; and specialist teacher training appears not to align to the educational context in which they work. Finally, the research identified other barriers to developing an individual's independence which are beyond the teaching of ECC, including inaccessible environments and equipment, and inadequate accommodations and adjustments.

Contents page

Abstract i

Contents page ii
List of figures v
List of tables v
Glossary vi
Dedication vii
Acknowledgements viii

Chapter 1. Introduction 1
1.1 Introduction 1
1.2 Who I am, how, and why I became interested in this research project 1
1.3 The nature of the study 3
1.4 An overview of the thesis 5
1.5 Conclusion 8

Chapter 2. Literature review 9
2.1 Introduction 9
2.2 The context: education in Turkey 14
2.3 How is the education of children with visual impairment conceptualised? 23
2.4 The notion of an additional curriculum 25
2.5 A key example of the additional curriculum – Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) 28
2.6 Teacher preparation and ECC uptake in the USA 36
2.7 The consequences of ECC training 39
2.8 Barriers to teaching ECC 42
2.9 Alternative and nuanced views of the additional curriculum 49
2.10 Linking back to Turkey 58
2.11 Conclusion 63

Chapter 3. Methodology 66
3.1 Introduction 66
3.2 My decision to conduct this research and the research questions 66
3.3 Philosophical standpoint 70
3.4 Validity, reliability, and reflexivity 76
3.5 The research design 79
3.6 Study 1: the views of twelve young adults with a visual impairment 83

3.7 Study 2: the views of thirteen educators of children and young adults with a visual impairment 86
3.8 Data analysis 87
3.9 Conclusion 92

Chapter 4. Study 1: the views of twelve young adults with a visual impairment 93
4.1 Introduction 93
4.2 The experienced balance of curriculum content 95
4.3 Consequences of the experienced balance of curriculum content 103
4.4 The 'ideal' curriculum balance 112
4.5 The barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum 113
4.6 The additional factors influencing independence (beyond ECC and associated teaching) 120
4.7 Conclusion 135

Chapter 5. Study 2: the views of thirteen educators of children and adults with a visual impairment 136
5.1 Introduction 136
5.2 The experienced curriculum content 138
5.3 Consequences of the experienced balance of curriculum content 145
5.4 The 'ideal' balance of curriculum 153
5.5 The barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum 156
5.6 Barriers to and enablers for independence beyond the ECC 167
5.7 Conclusion 175

Chapter 6. Discussion 177
6.1 Introduction 177
6.2 The experienced curriculum balance 178
6.3 Consequences of the experienced balance of curriculum content 187
6.4 The 'ideal' balance of curriculum 199
6.5 The barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum 217
6.6 The barriers to and enablers for independence (beyond ECC and associated teaching) 227
6.7 Conclusion 240

Chapter 7. Conclusion 244
7.1 Introduction 244
7.2 Answering the research questions 244

7.3 Contribution 252
7.4 Recommendations 257
7.5 Final reflections 263

References 266

Appendices 302

Appendix 1: Information sheet for study 1 302
Appendix 2: Consent form for study 1 305
Appendix 3: Data collection tool: educational experiences of people with visual impairments and their views on education in Turkey 306
Appendix 4: Information sheet for study 2 315
Appendix 5: Consent form for study 2 318
Appendix 6: Interview schedule for second study: 319

List of figures

Figure 1 Illustration of Bronfenbrenner Bio-ecological model 122

List of tables

Table 1 Overview of participants 94
Table 2 Independence: personal views 101
Table 3 Role of schools and teachers 102
Table 4 Personal views; self-advocacy 109
Table 5 Participants: Educators 137

Glossary

ARC	Adult Rehabilitation Centre
ECC	Expanded Core Curriculum
ICIDH	International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
MEB	Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı (Ministry of National Education, Turkey)
O&M	Orientation and Mobility
PSEC	Private Special Education Centre
RAM	Rehberlik Araştırma Merkezi (The Regional Guidance and Research Centres)
RP	Retinitis Pigmentosa
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TSVI	Teacher of Students with Visual Impairment
WHO	World Health Organization

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to:

- M. Kemal Atatürk and his friends who established the modern Turkey and changed the lives of millions.

- Dr Mitat Enç, co-founder of the special education field in Turkey. He not only changed the lives of many people with visual impairments, but also many people with different exceptionalities. He is my role model in academia.

- Mrs Panagiota (Betty) Leotsakou, president of ICEVI-Europe. Your unexpected loss was a painful reality to accept for everyone. I dedicate this thesis to you and your family for all the great work you have done for people with visual impairments. It was with deepest sadness that I finished this project knowing that you are not around to hear me talk about it.

- Last but not least, I dedicate this thesis to my beloved mother and all women who have been excluded from the education system and all those who advocate for the education of girls and children with disabilities across the world. Many many thanks for all your efforts.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to thank the founders of the Republic of Turkey who transformed the nation's destiny into one with a bright future. A special thanks goes to all Turkish citizen tax payers and the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Turkey for providing me with this incredible opportunity to study abroad. Without the country's transformation and the support that I received, this journey would only ever have been an unachievable dream and remained that way, just a dream – rather than a reality, thank you.

Secondly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Graeme Douglas and Professor Mike McLinden for their continuous support with my PhD study and related research, also, for their patience, time, motivation, and immense knowledge. Their guidance helped me throughout my research and whilst I wrote this thesis. Despite all my struggles, they always encouraged me and made me believe I would be a success; I could not have imagined having better mentors during my PhD study. Thank you very much for being with me every step of the way.

Besides my supervisors, I would like to thank my examiners, Professor Cay Holbrook and Dr Liz Hodges, for their insightful comments and their hard questions, which encouraged me to broaden my research and to consider various perspectives and have a great viva experience.

In addition, I would like to send my sincere thanks to everyone who participated in my study for giving up their valuable time and sharing their unique stories with me. Without your support and input this research would not have been possible. I also need to thank the "Parilti Association for the Visually Impaired" and the "Association of Visually Impaired in education" for their support during data collection.

I also thank my fellow PhD colleagues and friends for the stimulating discussions, for the sleepless nights we spent working together, and for all the fun we have had in the last five years. I also thank my first mentors in the field of visual impairment, Dr Amanda Lueck and Dr Sunggye Hong, who enlightened me the first glance of research in visual impairment.

In addition a special thanks needs to be extended to Dr Dogan Kaya and his beautiful wife, Saadet, for their awesome food, lovely conversation and for all their emotional support; they have always made me feel as if I have a family in the UK, despite being thousands of

kilometres away from my family in Turkey. In addition, I am grateful to Hayrunisa Pelge for her support throughout my time in the UK.

Last but not the least I would like to thank my family; my beautiful mother, brothers, sisters and all their cute children who have supported me throughout both in person and spiritually whilst writing this thesis – thank you and love always.

"Eğitimde feda edilecek fert yoktur",

["When it comes to education there is no individual who should be forsaken"]

M. Kemal Atatürk.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overall map of this thesis to the reader. It begins with an overview of my education and work history, including the challenges I faced, and how these factors influenced my thinking on issues faced by individuals with a visual impairment. I follow with a brief description of the research and an overview of the approach taken. I end by briefly describing each chapter of the thesis.

1.2 Who I am, how, and why I became interested in this research project

I was born with the condition Retinitis Pigmentosa. This visual condition causes decreased contrast sensitivity, decreased visual acuity, a narrow visual field, and significant difficulties in seeing at night (Lueck, 2010). In my case, whilst at school, I had almost no vision during the night and very little vision in the dark or shaded areas. Even though I had good vision during the day as a child, because of this congenital progressive condition, my vision has become worse over time. I therefore faced the challenges of not being able to see the blackboard and difficulties in following class demonstrations.

Due to a shortage of services for students with visual impairments in my area, I was not offered any additional support to deal with my visual impairment. As I did not receive any accommodation or modification, I faced great challenges in accessing the main curriculum and in fulfilling my academic potential. Additionally, I faced serious difficulties in travelling independently, building and maintaining healthy social relations, and many other skills which typically developing students would be learning incidentally.

As I was losing vision gradually over time, I developed strategies to deal with the everyday challenges and compensate for the lack of support and full vision in my educational and everyday life. In later years this meant I became more successful in exams than had previously been the case. Many people in my social environment were surprised by this and considered it to be an unbelievable achievement that I had completed secondary school, passed the national university entrance examination (ÖSS) and was able to attend a

university. I went on to graduate from Ataturk University, which is one of the oldest and well-established universities in Turkey.

After finishing my undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education (in 2007) I passed the national test to be hired as a teacher by the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MEB). Nonetheless, during this time (as was the case up to 2013) people who have disabilities were not often allowed to teach young children in public schools. Simply put, without considering people's abilities, MEB was saying to people with a disability 'you cannot do this job' (Salman, 2014). MEB did the same thing to me as well, and although I was fully qualified I was not allowed to work as a teacher purely because of my disability. Later on, I understood that this was a double-edged sword: not allowing disabled people to teach was both disgraceful and ironic at the same time. The Ministry was committing a crime based on universal human rights, but it was also not happy with the training it delivered to students with disabilities all over the country (by not allowing them to teach).

After not being allowed to teach, despite meeting all the criteria, I started to question my abilities. I became aware that I did not have many skills that people without a disability perform easily (e.g. using a computer, carrying out basic household tasks such as ironing). This was when I recognised the gap between what schools had taught me as a student with visual impairment and the life skills I required to be independent. This became more apparent when I worked in a PSEC (Private Special Education Centre), delivering training to children with a variety of special needs. I started paying more attention to what these individuals would need in everyday life in the future, and how much of these needs could be met in a school environment.

In 2009, I travelled to the USA to study English for a year and pursue my Master's degree. I studied at San Francisco State University in the Department of Special Education on the course of 'Teacher of the Visually Impaired'. My study and everyday life in the USA, offered me many very valuable experiences. Perhaps the most fascinating moment, for me, was reading about the "Expanded Core Curriculum" (ECC) (see Hatlen, 1996). Reading about the ECC, observing its implementation within American schools, and witnessing the consequences of ECC training on the life of people with visual impairments was fascinating. I realised that this (ECC) is what I did not have and what was missing from the Turkish education system. However whilst at school, I had not had any substantial contact with someone with a visual impairment, so I could not be sure if my educational experiences were

unique or whether other people with visual impairments had similar experiences all over Turkey.

I completed primary school in my village which did not have a middle or secondary school; I had never attended a school for the blind. My experiences therefore could be extreme compared to other people with a visual impairment. A brief literature review, revealed that there had been little research on this subject worldwide and none conducted in a Turkish context. Therefore, when I decided to pursue a PhD I knew I needed to conduct a study which would enable me to learn about the situation around the country from the first-hand experiences of people with visual impairments, and find out if they were having/had similar experiences to myself. If so, I knew I needed to fathom the cause(s) of this deficit in the educational system.

In conclusion, I have first-hand experience of being visually impaired and of studying in mainstream schools in Turkey, I received teacher preparation training, and I worked as a teacher both in mainstream and segregated schools. Consequently, I have gathered an important amount of information about the quality of the teaching delivered to students with visual impairments; this personal experience has assisted me to conceptualise the research problem in this study and has led me to focus on: (i) how schools are promoting the independence of students with a visual impairment; (ii) the consequences of this preparation on daily lives of individuals with a visual impairment; (iii) the barriers to and enablers for promoting the independence of students with visual impairments from the perspectives of young adults with a visual impairment; and (iv) the educators who are responsible for teaching students with a visual impairment.

1.3 The nature of the study

As I described above, my schooling and work experiences led me to question how the education system prepares students with visual impairments for life after school. This relates to the formal qualifications students may achieve, including broader outcomes related to employment, independence, inclusion in their community and general life satisfaction. Such a focus upon the educational outcomes arguably cuts to the very essence of what an education system is for, and how schools should serve students generally, and more specifically, how schools should serve students with a visual impairment.

These broad questions led me to develop the following research questions which guided this project:

1. What is the balance of the curriculum content experienced by students with visual impairments in Turkey?
2. What are the direct and indirect consequences of this experienced balance of the curriculum content upon lives of individuals with visual impairments in Turkey?
3. What is the 'ideal' curriculum balance which should be available for students with visual impairments in Turkey?
4. What are the barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum for students with visual impairments in Turkey?

Based on my personal experience as a person with a visual impairment, I anticipated that young adults with a visual impairment might offer a different view on the necessity of the ECC compared to children and pupils. Since many young children, including ones without a visual impairment, have little need to be independent because their parents or guardians tend to meet the majority of their needs, younger people may not perceive the value of the ECC or see that it deserves time and effort. Yet, when they get older their needs and views regarding the ECC change. Therefore, I decided to interview young adults with visual impairments who are at an age when they want to establish their own life and are able to judge their educational journey and current life more objectively regarding training they received at school and challenges they are currently facing. Indeed, this is why I chose young adults with visual impairments as participants rather than students with visual impairments who are still in compulsory education in Turkey.

Since I was interested in the experiences of young adults with visual impairments and their views in relation to the research questions, I collected evidence from twelve young adults (21–35) who had had a visual impairment whilst at school in Turkey. I used a face-to-face semi-structured interview with a mixed method approach to gather their views. The participants came from a range of educational settings (including schools for the blind, mainstream schools and those that transferred between the two) and had different levels of vision ranging from being totally blind to those with low vision.

Gathering the views of individuals with visual impairments only provided one perspective regarding the achieved curriculum balance and the barriers and enablers to receiving training

on ECC. I believed it was crucial to also gain views of educators as they are an essential additional stakeholder in the education system.

The intention was that this would enable me to a) build a richer and deeper understanding of the issues from multiple perspectives; b) compare and contrast the findings from Study 1 through the use of a cross-sectional comparative study; c) to ascertain if the educators were familiar with the claims made by individuals with visual impairments regarding what was happening or not happening in the school system; and d) to capture the challenges faced by the educators, which might not be known to the students. Therefore, a range of educators who teach people with visual impairments were included as participants in the study that gathered data via semi-structured face-to-face interviews. I conducted interviews with: two lecturers from the only teacher preparation programme, 'Teacher of the Visually Impaired' (TSVI) course in Turkey; two qualified-TSVIs who are responsible for assessment at the Guidance and Research Centres (Rehberlik Araştırma Merkezi – RAMs); an itinerant TSVI; a subject (English) teacher; two TSVIs – classroom teachers at schools for the blind; two deputy heads at schools for the blind; two teachers from a PSEC; and an instructor from the Adult Rehabilitation Centre (ARC). The aim, instead of generalising the findings to the entire country, was to have an overview across different settings and stakeholders of the education system.

More detailed information about the participants and the data collection process is included in Chapter 3, Methodology, and the findings from the two studies are reported in Chapters 4 and 5.

1.4 An overview of the thesis

1.4.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overall map of this thesis to the reader. I introduce myself as the researcher, explain how my experiences have influenced me in conducting this study, provide a brief overview on nature of the study, and then introduce the entire thesis for easy navigation.

1.4.2 Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter starts with a short overview of the approach to reviewing the literature and the definition of 'visual impairment' and models of disability and the ICF (International

Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health). It also includes a detailed overview of the Turkish education system and the historical development of special education (SEN), particularly for those with a visual impairment, and the legal framework and schooling options for students with visual impairments in Turkey. Then there is a background overview of the education of students with visual impairments (e.g. pedagogy, curriculum and curriculum access). This leads to a discussion about the concept of an 'additional curriculum', and why it is needed. As a key example of the additional curriculum, the USA-based Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) is described and explained, and other similar curricula are summarised. The teacher preparation and uptake of the ECC in the USA is discussed. The influence of ECC training on the lives of individuals with visual impairments is outlined, followed by a discussion of the potential barriers to teaching the ECC. Finally, contrasts are made between the literature on inclusive education/disability rights and the ECC, and the chapter concludes with a short overview on the Turkish culture and how the additional curriculum is conceptualised in the Turkish context which leads to the development and presentation of the final research questions explored within this thesis.

1.4.3 Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter introduces the factors driving this research. It progresses into a discussion of different philosophical standpoints, elucidating positivism and interpretivism, and my interpretivist philosophical standpoint is explicitly outlined. The use of different frameworks, theoretical and policy research, as well as inductive versus deductive research paradigms, is discussed. The sources that have influenced the conceptualising of this research project, including a justification of the use of my personal experiences are presented. The chapter progresses with a discussion of validity, reliability, generalisability and reflexivity. The chapter then moves on to discuss the choice of design and, specifically, the use of certain design elements. In this section the implemented research design, which is a variation of cross-sectional comparative design, the choice of data collection methods, e.g. face-to-face semi-structured interviews, and the data collection tools are described. The reasons for choosing semi-structured interviews and the interview schedules used are discussed in detail and the data collection processes and samples are described for each of the two studies. Finally, the chapter ends with a description of the data analysis procedures used in this thesis – thematic analysis.

1.4.4 Chapter 4: Study 1: The views of twelve young adults with a visual impairment

This chapter begins with a reminder of the research questions and an overview of the participants. It progresses with an overview of experienced curriculum balance by young adults with visual impairments and consequences of this experienced curriculum balance on their lives. It progresses with an overview of what they consider to be the ideal curriculum balance, which includes a greater emphasis upon the ECC. It also identifies the barriers to and enablers for teaching ECC (including teachers' attitudes and shortage of materials, for example). Finally, the chapter presents other barriers and enablers beyond ECC and associated teaching that were reported to have influenced the independence of these individuals, including physical barriers and cultural attitudes.

1.4.5 Chapter 5: Study 2: The views of thirteen educators of children and young adults with a visual impairment

This chapter begins with a reminder of the research questions and an overview of the participants. It progresses with an overview of the findings regarding the experienced curriculum balance and the consequences of this balance on lives of individuals with a visual impairment. It progresses with an overview what the participants consider as the ideal curriculum balance to prepare individuals with visual impairments as independent individuals. Barriers to and enablers for teaching the ECC including teachers' attitudes, curriculum, materials are also considered. Finally, the chapter considers other barriers and enablers beyond ECC and associated teaching that influenced the independence of individuals with a visual impairment.

1.4.6 Chapter 6: Discussion

In this chapter the findings relating to the research questions are summarised and blended together from both studies and discussed with reference to the existing literature. Although there are similarities between the views of young adults with visual impairments (Study 1) and educators (Study 2), the findings of the studies do differ. These similarities and differences are discussed in detail. In addition, based on my personal experiences, I tried to outline a model whereby the ECC could be taught effectively for students with visual impairment in the existing conditions of Turkey. The chapter concludes with some final reflections.

1.4.7 Chapter 7: Conclusion

The overall aim of this final chapter is to draw together the various strands of the research project and the thesis. The chapter begins with a final response to each research question in turn and then progresses to the contributions made to theory, methodology, and practice. Later on, I suggest ways in which different stakeholders of the education system and society (e.g. policy makers, the MEB, educators, families) can promote access to a more appropriate curriculum balance and promote independence of individuals with a visual impairment. The chapter concludes with some final reflections, including the strengths and limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter began with an overview of my education and work history, including the challenges I faced and how these factors influenced my thinking on issues faced by individuals with a visual impairment. Next I gave a brief description of the research and an overview of the approach taken in this study. I ended by briefly describing each chapter of the thesis. The next chapter provides a summary of literature on some frequently used concepts e.g. visual impairment, ECC and provides a detailed overview of the Turkish educational context as well as background overview of the education of students with visual impairments (e.g. pedagogy, curriculum and curriculum access), and a discussion about the concept of an ‘additional curriculum’, and why it is needed. Finally, by drawing on existing literature, research questions are further developed and discussed.

Chapter 2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a short overview of how literature was reviewed, the definition of 'visual impairment' and a summary of models of disability. A detailed overview of the Turkish education system is outlined which includes the historical development of special education, particularly for those with a visual impairment, and the legal framework and schooling options for students with visual impairments in Turkey. Then the chapter progresses with a background overview of the education of students with visual impairments (e.g. pedagogy, curriculum and curriculum access). This leads to a discussion about the concept of an 'additional curriculum', and why it is needed. As a key example of the additional curriculum, the USA-based Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) is described and explained, and other similar curricula are summarised. The teacher preparation and ECC uptake in the USA is discussed. The influence of ECC training on lives of individuals with visual impairments is outlined, followed by a discussion of the potential barriers to teaching the ECC. Later on, contrasts are made between literature on inclusive education/disability rights and ECC, as well as cultural differences and their links with concepts of the ECC/additional curriculum in Turkey. The chapter concludes with a short overview on how the additional curriculum is conceptualised in the Turkish context which leads to the development and presentation of the final research questions explored in this research.

2.1.1 Approach to the literature review

The aim of the literature review is to offer important information in order to assist the reader to understand the studied phenomenon and the overall research context. Moreover, the literature review aims to find out what is known about the research subject and what other researchers achieved in their research. Therefore, the broad purpose of this chapter is to provide contextual information and to look for, and provide, a general overview of the literature in relation to the initial broad research question, which could be framed as "What was the education system for and what skills and abilities should people with visual impairments be leaving with?"

According to Thomas (2013), there are two types of literature reviews: the *systematic* review and the *narrative* review. In the systematic review, a particular method is used to search for research on a topic in a wide range of peer review sources; only studies which meet the

predetermined criteria and/or quality are included in the ultimate review. A narrative review, by contrast, discusses and summarises the literature on a particular topic without conforming to a particular search formula. Based on my initial interaction with the literature, I knew that there was little written on this subject; consequently, I used a narrative literature review approach.

Sources of significant literature in the field of visual impairment are relatively limited. The major sources include three international journals: the *British Journal of Visual Impairment* (BJVI), the *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness* (JVIB), and the *Journal of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (Review)*. In addition, textbooks, policy documents, research reports and the search engine of the university library, Google Scholar, and major educational databases (e.g. Eric, PsychINFO, Academic Complete) were also used.

I have limited my literature review to between September 2012 and December 2015. Publications after December 2015 were not included. However, since there has been little published on this subject, old publications were included. The following keywords were used in different combinations to review the literature “independent”, “independence”, “independent living”, “blind”, “blindness”, “visually impaired”, “vision impaired”, “sight impaired”, “visual impairment”, “low vision”, “Turkey”, “Turkish”, “additional curriculum”, “expanded core curriculum”.

With regard to the balance of accessed materials on the research subject, much of the literature is related to western countries (e.g. the USA, Canada, Australia and England). A very limited number of publications covered the situation in Turkey. Furthermore, much of the found literature could be described as "grey literature", in that it often consists of anecdotal accounts and small-scale studies (Douglas et al., 2009). These were drawn upon only when other types of literature were not available.

2.1.2 What is a visual impairment?

There are several different definitions of visual impairment; broadly, the term covers a wide range of individuals with visual conditions, with a continuum of loss in visual function (Douglas & McLinden, 2005; Lieberman, Ponchillia, & Ponchillia, 2012), “including individuals who are totally blind or have only light perception as well as those with poor or reduced

visual acuity, difficulty tracking moving objects, poor depth perception, light sensitivity, and/or peripheral field loss" (Haegele, Lieberman, Columna, & Runyan, 2014, p.2).

One of the most widely used definitions of visual impairment in the literature is provided by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2015a). This definition is based on visual acuity, and in order to judge the severity of visual impairment a standardised method of measuring visual acuity is used (e.g. the Snellen chart). Based on measurement with both eyes open, with the best possible correction, according to WHO (2015a):

- a visual acuity better than 6/18 is deemed normal vision;
- a visual acuity of between 6/18 and 6/60, is described as moderate visual impairment;
- a visual acuity of between 6/60 and 6/120 is described as severe visual impairment;
- a visual acuity of less than 6/120 is described as blindness.

In everyday language, the term "blind" is generally used to refer to someone who has no useful sight. Nevertheless, according to WHO (2015a), "blind" refers to someone who has 6/120 visual acuity or less. This means that many individuals who are classified as blind may still have some useful vision which they are able to use in their educational and everyday life.

"Low vision" is a term often encountered in literature, especially in the North American context. Historically it used in the WHO definition of visual impairment instead of "moderate visual impairment". An individual with low vision will find it difficult to complete tasks which require eye sight, even when they use corrective lenses. Nevertheless, they can tackle these challenges through the use of compensatory visual strategies, assistive technology devices and environmental modifications (Corn & Erin, 2010).

For the purpose of clarification, it is important to note that a visual acuity of 6/120 means that the person can distinguish details at six metres, compared with a person without a visual impairment who can distinguish fine detail at 120 metres.

The Ministry of Education (MEB) in Turkey appears to avoid any firm definition of visual impairment and instead prefers broad descriptions. For instance, according to MEB (2015) a student with visual impairment is someone who has a total or partial sight loss and requires special education. Using such a broad description could be seen as a positive attempt to not exclude those who may not meet the clinical definitions of visual impairment. Yet before

deciding who can qualify for special education services, MEB does require that students should obtain a medical report (Diken, 2004; MEB 2014). Simply put, instead of offering assistance to those that meet their own eligibility criteria, MEB only considers medical reports that are prepared to the WHO criteria.

Nevertheless, In Turkish literature, “visual impairment” is broadly categorised as total blindness and low vision (Demir & Şen, 2009; Okuturlar, 1968); according to Demir & Şen (2009) “after all possible corrections, in the better eye existence of a maximum 10% of remaining vision and less than 20 degrees of a visual field is called blindness” (p.3). Someone with best correction who has a visual acuity of between 20/70 and 20/200 is defined as having low vision (Demir & Sen, 2009). However, these definitions of visual impairment are problematic. With regard to the definition of total blindness or blindness, the 10% of normal vision is quite confusing and far from informative. It is likely that the authors interpreted 20/200 as 10% using basic mathematical calculations. However, this simplification is invalid; the claim that someone with 20/100 visual acuity can see twice as well as someone with 20/200 visual acuity is misleading. How much each person can see will change according to the diagnosis, the usage of functional vision and many other factors. Another problem with Demir & Şen’s definition is that the limitation of the visual field and reduced visual acuity are presented as if both are required for a diagnosis of blindness. Nevertheless, according to WHO (2015a) the definition that should be used instead of “limited visual field and reduced acuity” is a “limited visual field” OR “reduced acuity”. On the other hand, Demir & Şen (2009) add that their definitions are used in many western countries as well as Turkey. This suggests that although in Turkey the definitions offered by WHO (2015a) are being broadly used to diagnose visual impairment, not all of the categorisations summarised above are being used. This leads to misinterpretation of the definitions and misidentification (under-identification) of people with a visual impairment.

It needs to be stressed that the majority of definitions of visual impairment are insufficient on their own for educational purposes because they are incomplete, being based upon gross measurements, using a distance measure (Bishop, 2004) and ignore the close point and reading distance vision. It is therefore not appropriate to use only medical definitions in determining whether a student qualifies for special education services. Eligibility requirements should instead be dependent on functional vision rather than on a numerical definition (especially since two students can have the same numerical descriptor and function very differently (Bishop, 2004). Since there are multiple terms to define someone

with a visual impairment, and the definitions are missing some aspects of vision (e.g. contrast sensitivity, light sensitivity), for the purpose of this study visual impairment will be used as a broader term which covers “blind”, “low vision”, severe and moderate visual impairment. Similarly, “total blindness” is used throughout the thesis to refer to someone with only light perception or without any useful remaining vision. In contrast, “low vision” is used to refer to someone with some useful functioning vision regardless of its numeric measurement.

2.1.3 Models of disability and ICF

The individual (medical) model of disability is one of the first attempts to describe what is a “disability” (Shakespeare, 2008), and the term “medical model” of disability in itself appears to have arisen due to the *International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap* (ICIDH) (Barnes, 2009; 2012; Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000; Shakespeare, 2008). The ICIDH was developed during the 1970s by a group of social scientists led by Philip Wood – “the aim was to clarify some of the concepts and terminology surrounding disability in order to facilitate research and policy in this increasingly important area” (Barnes, 2009, online).

The individual model of disability conceptualises ‘disability’ as any restriction in performing an activity within the range considered normal for a human being, as a direct result of impairment (Barnes, 2012; Bury, 1997, 2000; Williams, 1999). According to the individual model of disability, the impairments themselves are the main source of the problems associated with a disability, and the same reasoning mandates that they should be exterminated, diminished, minimised or fixed (Barnes, 2009; 2012). Nevertheless, when “cures” are not possible for a disability, which is frequently the case, people with impairments are labelled “disabled” and considered incomplete, “abnormal”, and incapable of participating in and contributing to the everyday life of the community (Barnes, 2012; Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000; Shakespeare, 2008). People with disabilities themselves quite naturally reject being defined as abnormal and, this led to “the rejection of the medical model as the predominant model of disability” (Llewellyn & Hogan, 2000, p.159).

Moreover, as a consequence of the policies crafted through the individual model of disability, people with disabilities faced a number of economic and social deprivations (Barnes, 2009, 2012). In the middle of the twentieth century, disabled activists questioned these practices (Oliver, 2013) and suggested instead that the experience of “disability” was one of social oppression or institutional discrimination (Barnes, 2009, 2012). This movement led to a

reinterpretation of disability, with a new model being created, commonly known as the “social model of disability” (Barnes, 2012; Oliver, 2013; Oliver & Barnes, 2012).

One of the main influences of the social model of disability is that the responsibility for the experienced disadvantages by people with a disability is shifted from the individual to the organisations and institutions of contemporary society (Barnes, 2009, 2012; Oliver, 2013). Advocates for the social model of disability argue that disability only exists in a socially constructed way and is imposed on people with impairments (Hutchison, 1995). In other words, the main disabling factor is the environment rather than the impairment itself (Oliver, 2013; Swain & French, 2010).

The individual model of disability and social model of disability offer two different lenses through which social exclusion and disability are conceptualised: either by focusing on the impairment or on social barriers (Douglas, Corcoran, & Pavey, 2007). In 2001, WHO published the *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (ICF) as a revision of the ICIDH (Douglas et al., 2007; Douglas, Pavey, Corcoran, & Clements, 2012; WHO, 2001). The ICF introduced a new framework, constructed on the bio-psychosocial model, to describe health and functioning at the levels of both individual and population (Rouquette, Badley, Falissard, Dub, Leplege, & Coste, 2015). This new classification emphasised an inclusive agenda and focussed on social participation. Furthermore, it attempted to integrate both the individual and social models of disability; as such it recognised the restrictions of impairment whilst simultaneously acknowledging the impact of social exclusion (Douglas et al., 2007, 2012).

2.2 The context: education in Turkey

This research is mainly concerned with people with visual impairments who live in Turkey. Therefore, this section gives a historical overview before describing the current special education situation in Turkey, particularly regarding those with a visual impairment.

2.2.1 An historical view of the education of people with visual impairments in Turkey

The history of Turkish special education goes back to 1455 (Melekoğlu, Çakıroğlu & Malmgren, 2009). The name of the first special school system was Enderun Schools (Melekoğlu et al., 2009), and the primary aim was to train gifted and talented pupils for

service to the government (Melekoğlu et al., 2009; Sakız & Woods, 2014). Despite this early attempt, there were no further efforts to educate children with disabilities until the late 19th century when the Istanbul Ticaret Mektebi (the Istanbul Trading School) for deaf students opened in 1889 (Enç, 2014; Kargin, 2004; Senel, 1998). Later, a unit for students with visual impairments was added to this school (Çitil, 2007; Enç, 2014; Melekoğlu et al*.,* 2009). In late 1910s the school closed due to War World One (Akçamete, 2009; Citil, 2007; Özsoy et al.; 1998).

After the demise of the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey was established at the beginning of the 1920s and the Özel Izmir Sagırlar/Körler Okulu (The Izmir Private School for the Deaf /Blind) opened in 1921 – the first institution established to serve students with visual impairments in the modern Republic of Turkey. Even though this school was established initially as a private institution, within a short period it was adopted by the Ministry of Health and Social Aid and provided education under the management of this Ministry until 1950 (Ataman, 2005; Citil, 2007; Enç, 2014). In 1950, the Izmir School for the Deaf/Blind was transferred to the Ministry of National Education (MEB) (Akkök, 2001; Enç, 2014; Kargin, 2004; MEB, 2005). In 1951, the blind unit of the Izmir School for the Deaf/Blind was moved to Ankara and became the first school for the blind (Ataman, 2005; Enç, 2014; Kargın, 2004; Melekoğlu et al., 2009).

After the establishment of the first school for the blind in Ankara, the second, the GAP School for the Blind was established in 1968 in Gaziantep. In the 1970s several other schools for the blind were also opened, e.g. İstanbul Veysel Vardal School for the Blind (1970), İzmir Aşık Veysel School for the Blind (1972), Ankara Göreneller School for the Blind (1974) (Çitil, 2007). Nevertheless, one of the most important issues in the continued development of Turkish Special Education was the lack of trained professionals. When MEB took over the responsibility of special education provision in 1951 there were no trained professionals in this area (Ataman, 2005; Akyüz & Kaya 2014; Enç, 2014; Küçükahmet, 2007; Melekoğlu, et al., 2009; Özyürek, 2005, 2008). As a result, Gazi University set up a Special Education Department and delivered teacher preparation training in 1952 as a two-year undergraduate programme. However, this only lasted for two years and was closed in 1954 (Enç, 2014; Melekoğlu, et al., 2009; Özyürek, 2008). In later years, the needs of teachers for students with special educational needs (SEN) were met by hiring regular classroom teachers and by offering short-term certificate programmes (Ataman, 2005; Enç, 2014; Özyürek, 2008; Senel, 1998).

In 1982, the teacher preparation role was transferred from the MEB (by stopping the certification programmes) and given to universities. In 1984 the systematic qualified SEN teacher preparation programme was re-instituted at Anadolu University. Initially, this was a four-year undergraduate SEN teacher preparation programme, but later it divided into two specialisations: “teachers of the deaf” and “the teacher of students with learning disabilities” (Ataman, 2005; Özyürek, 2005, 2008).

After Anadolu University, Gazi University followed by establishing an SEN teacher preparation programme which opened in 1986. Indeed, this SEN teacher preparation programme was re-established after the first attempt failed in 1954, showing a late understanding of need for this type of training. The teacher preparation programme at Gazi University offered general SEN training until 1993. After 1993, students on this programme received general SEN training for two years, and then could opt to specialise in either teaching students with learning disabilities or students with visual impairments in last two years of their programme. Until 1998, only around three or four students each year chose to specialise in the teaching of the students with visual impairments (Çitil, 2007). In 1998 the SEN teacher preparation programme was divided and formed two separate programmes. The first was for teaching students with intellectual disabilities and the second was for primary teachers for students with a visual impairment. Currently, Gazi University is the only university which offers training in the area of visual impairment in the whole country and until recently, around 30–40 students were accepted each year (Çitil, 2007).

In summary, although the history of Turkish special education goes back to the fifteenth century, in reality, the education of students with visual impairments only started in the late 1880s and was disrupted several times. And, despite earlier efforts, the systematic teacher preparation for students with visual impairments did not start until the late 1990s.

2.2.2 The legal framework of special education and current issues in Turkey

Educational rights of children with SEN were mentioned for the first time in the 1961 in Turkey’s constitution (Enç, 2014). Eres (2010) states that based on this constitution, the Primary Instruction and Education Law (no.222) which came into effect in 1962, indicated that schools and classes must provide accommodations for children with SEN. The constitution has since been updated further. In article 42 of the 1982 constitution (which is still in place) it says that “the State shall take necessary measures to rehabilitate those in

need of special education so as to render such people useful to society" (cited in Nadir & Aktan 2015, p.215).

This statement suggests that the government at that time took a medical model approach as it indicates that the aim of special education is to rehabilitate, in other words, fix those who are in need. Despite gaps in legislation and a lack of implementation, the late 1990s could be described as a major period for Turkish special education because "a reorganization, reestablishment, and updating of all the governmental provisions took place" (Akkök, 2000, p.274). "The involvement of parents in the educational provisions, initiation of individualised educational programmes, importance of early intervention, and effective implementation of inclusion were major areas of emphasis in Act 573 of 1997" (Akkök, 2000, p.274).

The principles of special education as indicated in law KHK 573 (1997) on special education are:

- all individuals who are in need of SEN services will benefit from the services in line with their interests, wishes, adequacies and capabilities;
- education of individuals with SEN should start at an early age;
- SEN services will be planned and delivered without separating individuals from their social and physical environments as much as possible;
- educating individuals with SEN, together with other individuals, is prioritised by taking those individuals' educational performances into consideration and by making adaptations in the aim, content and teaching processes;
- for students with SEN to be able to continue their education at any level without any interruption, cooperation needs to be established with institutions and organisations, in order to provide support through varied rehabilitation provisions;
- Individualised Education Plans (IEP's) will be developed for individuals with SEN, and the educational programmes will also be individualised;
- opinions of organisations working for individuals with SEN will be asked to contribute to SEN policy development;
- SEN services will be planned to cover social interaction and the mutual adaptation process of individuals who are in need of special education (adapted from Çavkaytar, 2006, p.41).

Furthermore, the Turkish Disability Act [Engelliler Hakkinda Kanun], no.: 5378 (2005) emphasises the rights of people with disabilities and especially highlights the need for an

inclusive educational environment for children with SEN. Article 15 of this Act, titled "Education and Training", states that:

> "The right to education of disabled people cannot be prevented for any reason. Disabled children, youngsters and adults are provided with equal education with non-disabled people and in inclusive environments, taking the special conditions and differences into consideration" (OZIDA, 2005).

Starting in the 1990s, this new inclusive approach which embraces the social model of disability, is in contrast to the historical approach where children with disabilities and their needs were ignored in Turkish society. For instance, in the past, children with a severe impairment were regarded as individuals that could not benefit from any education (Melekoğlu et al., 2009; Özgür, 2004), and therefore, were excluded from the education system.

Following these improvements in legislation, the SEN Services Regulation (2012) – which can be interpreted as a code of practice – was also updated to highlight the educational needs of students with exceptionalities and to offer clearer guidelines regarding the implementation of inclusive services. As Turkey was then in the process of applying for European Union membership, this shift in approach toward disability and the education of children with a disability could be viewed as the result of influence from the disability movements in both Turkey and Europe, whereby researchers and advocates such as Colin Barnes and Michael Oliver in the UK outlined theories regarding the social model of disability (Barnes & Mercer, 2004): it is likely that there is an influence of both national and international dynamics in these legislative improvements.

Even though at this stage the laws are very comprehensive and are as detailed as many developed countries (Akkök, & Zelloth, 2010; Bayhan & Sipal, 2011; Çakıroğlu & Melekoğlu, 2014; Eres, 2010; Meral & Turnbull 2014; Melekoğlu et al., 2009; Sakız & Woods, 2015), the principles have neither always been adhered to nor implemented completely (Ataman, 2005; Çakıroğlu & Melekoğlu, 2014; Melekoğlu et al., 2009; Sakız & Woods, 2014). One of the most obvious problems reported in implementation is a shortage of specialist educators (Akkök, & Zelloth, 2010; Ataman, 2005; Bayhan & Sipal, 2011; Melekoğlu et al., 2009; Sakız & Woods, 2014; Senel, 1998). With regard to visual impairment, Gazi University is still the only teacher preparation programme. Moreover, this institution prepares only "primary school teachers for students with visual impairments" (Çitil, 2007). This suggests that no TSVIs are available to serve students at lower secondary (middle) schools for the blind or in any mainstream and secondary school.

Nevertheless, although specialist teacher preparation started late and universities' resources were limited, Eres (2010) identified a significant growth in the number of specialist teachers. For instance, in the 1995–1996 school year, there were only 1,854 SEN teachers in Turkey, but this number tripled in the last ten years, before reaching 4,524 (Eres, 2010). The reason for this increase is short-term certification programmes and the establishment of new teacher preparation programmes in SEN. There is not however, any evidence suggesting such an increase in the number of TSVIs.

Özyürek (2005) claims that although universities are responsible for preparing teachers in SEN, the MEB has illegally resumed delivering short-term training to a variety of graduates from primary school teachers to agriculture graduates and hiring them as SEN teachers to meet the needs of both the public schools and PSECs. "Because of teacher shortages, in addition to graduates of special education programmes, graduates of other professions, such as psychology, social work, early childhood education, and elementary education, are able to work as special education teachers in public schools and agencies upon the completion of short-term certification programmes" (Erbaş, Turan, Aslan, & Dunlap, 2009, p.117). These professionals typically hold undergraduate degrees and add the "SEN certificate" to their current areas of specialty. In line with the above, according to the 2012 SEN regulation, the graduates of the "Early Childhood Education" departments can work at the PSECs to serve students with SEN (including those with a visual impairment) without even a short-term certification.

On the other hand, although these certification programmes are reported to be successful in increasing the number of SEN teachers (Kircaali-Iftar, 2006), "the qualifications of individuals who complete[ed] these programmes have been questioned" (Erbaş, et al., 2009, p.117). "Concerns regarding these programmes include the relevance of course content, the use of in-service staff members with limited training, large class sizes, attendance issues of the prospective teachers, and certification not being tied to a passing grade" (Erbaş, et al., 2009, p.117).

Another major issue with the current field of Turkish SEN is that despite improvements in legislation and the significant increase in the number of specialist educators and children attending schools, the number of students with a disability attending schools is still low (Çakıroğlu & Melekoğlu, 2014; Melekoğlu et al., 2009; Senel, 1998). The total number of people with disabilities is 8,431,937, which is 12.29% of the total population (Başbakanlık

Özürlüler İdaresi Başkanlığı (OZİDA), 2006). Of these individuals with disabilities, the percentage of those who attend school is only 2.5% (Çakıroğlu & Melekoğlu, 2014; MEB, 2015; Melekoğlu et al., 2009). Moreover, as illustrated below (under School options for students with a visual impairment), the number of students attending schools for the blind is too low and the number of students with visual impairments who are attending mainstream schools is not deemed to be accurate. The low number of identified students with SEN could be due to the fact that students attending mainstream schools are not recorded, or that some school age children with disability might be out of the education system. The latter is of more concern.

2.2.3 School options for students with visual impairments in Turkey

MEB is responsible for the organisation of both regular and special education in Turkey. "The Regional Guidance and Research Centres (RAMs), supervised by the General Directorate of Special Education, Guidance, and Counselling Services" (Sakiz & Woods, 2014, p.137), are responsible for diagnosing and organising placements of students with SEN. These centres conduct assessments of students referred to them and evaluate their educational needs. As a result the students are then placed in an appropriate environment, whereby the necessary SEN services can be delivered (Diken, Bayhan, Turan, Sipal, Sucuoğlu, Ceber-Bakkaloğlu,... & Kara, 2012; Karasu, 2014; Melekoğlu, et al., 2009; Sakız & Woods, 2014; Sucuoğlu & Kargın, 2012). Students with visual impairments could therefore be placed either in a mainstream school or a school for the blind.

A brief description of schooling possibilities and the attending number of students with visual impairments are summarised below.

2.2.3.1 Early Childhood (Age 0–3)

According to the Turkish Disability Act (2005), the SEN services organised to deliver support for very young children at home and in institutions are based on the principle of educating and supporting the family. However, according to Akkök (2001), Kesiktaş (2009) and Bayhan & Sipal (2011) there are no guidelines describing how these services should be organised and delivered. Therefore, it was not possible to access any evidence indicating such services for this age group (Kesiktaş, 2009).

2.2.3.2 Pre-primary education (ages 3–5)

Pre-primary education involves the education of children between the ages of three and five (MEB 2015a). The objective of pre-primary education is to prepare children for primary education and "to ensure that children develop physically, mentally and emotionally" (MEB, 2015a). Pre-school (kindergarten) is compulsory for children who have been diagnosed with a disability. Training is delivered at either segregated or mainstream pre-schools. According to MEB (2015a) statistics, there are only two schools for the blind that have early childhood units yet the exact number of students at these units is not known. Similarly, any figure regarding number of students in mainstream schools could not be accessed.

2.2.3.3 Primary schools (ages 5–9)

Children with SEN can attend segregated primary schools or mainstream schools. For the ones who cannot perform within the requirements and aims of mainstream schools, separate institutions can be established to implement individualised educational plans based on their characteristics (MEB 2015a). Taking this into consideration, there are currently sixteen primary schools for the blind in the country and 567 students attending in total (MEB 2015a).

2.2.3.4 Lower secondary (middle) schools (ages 9–13)

In 2012, the Primary Instruction and Education Law (no.222) was amended. As a result, instead of children receiving eight years of non-stop primary schooling, four+four years was introduced. Therefore, after the first four years of primary school, students must attend another four years of lower secondary (middle) school. Based on the Primary Instruction and Education Law (no.222), the sixteen schools for the blind were divided so that sixteen primary schools for the blind and sixteen middle schools for the blind were created. Most of the schools were only divided on paper. In other words, no actual change took place in the schools for the blind. For example, Kayseri School for the Blind became two separate schools: a primary school and middle school; however, both schools are located in the same building and perform as one single unit. In total, the number of students attending a middle school for the blind is 701 in Turkey. On the other hand, according to MEB (2015c), there are 1,638 students with visual impairments who are attending a mainstream primary and lower secondary (middle) school.

2.2.3.5 Secondary schools (ages 13–17)

According to the Primary Instruction and Education Law (no.222) and Law on Special Education (no: 573), individuals with SEN can attend a segregated secondary school, a mainstream secondary school or a vocational secondary school. However, for pupils with visual impairment, no segregated secondary schools exist in the country (Ataman, 2005). The only options available for these students are to either attend a mainstream secondary school or a vocational secondary school. According to the MEB (2015a) and MEB (2015c) there are two institutions offering vocational training to 38 students with visual impairments in the entire country whereas there are 270 students attending mainstream secondary schools.

2.2.3.6 Private special education centres

An addition was made in 2005 to law no.3797 so that children with SEN would be able to receive training and support from PSECs with a proportion of the fees being paid for by MEB (Çitil, 2007). These centres are not regular schools, instead they offer after-school support to students with disabilities. Based on the SEN code of practice (MEB Özel Egitim Kurumlari hakkinda yonetmelik 2012), every month, each student receives a maximum of up to twelve hours training. An additional support programme, Destek Ogretim Programi, can also be implemented in these institutions. This programme/curriculum is the closest in concept to an additional curriculum for students with visual impairments but it only covers maths, the Turkish language and “Independent Living Skills”. What is interesting is that this programme/curriculum is only implemented in PSECs and is not available at mainstream schools or schools for the blind. Furthermore, Çitil (2007) highlights that the number of these centres which serve students with visual impairments and the number of students with visual impairments in these centres is not known.

As illustrated above, there are only 3,244 students with visual impairments attending any form of school in the entire country. For the 2014–2015 academic year the figures suggest that from the total number of 17,559,989 students (MEB 2015a), only 0.0183% had a visual impairment. This is much lower than developed countries (see Capella-McDonnall, 2005; Kirchner & Diament, 1999; Kirchner, & Smith, 2005; Lieberman, Ponchillia, & Ponchillia, 2012). Moreover, the majority of students in other countries with visual impairments attend mainstream schools. Yet, findings stress that although in the last decade the number of students with SEN attending mainstream schools has tripled (Çakıroğlu & Melekoğlu, 2014; Melekoğlu, 2014), a number of authors indicate their concerns about mainstream placements

and suggest that students with SEN who attend mainstream schools barely receive any of the necessary accommodations and specialist services (see Altunay-Arslantekin, 2015; Ataman, 2005; Bayram, Corlu, Aydin, Ortactepe & Alapala 2015; Cakiroğlu & Melekoğlu 2014; Enç, 2014; Melekoğlu, 2014; Sakız & Woods, 2014, 2015; Sülün, 2012; Şafak, 2012).

2.3 How is the education of children with visual impairment conceptualised?

In what ways can the learning needs of children with visual impairments be considered distinctive? Of key significance in addressing this question is an understanding of the role of vision in a child's learning experiences, as well as an appreciation of the potential impact of impaired vision for learning and development (Hatton, 2014; Douglas & McLinden, 2005; Webster & Roe, 1998).

2.3.1 How vision can influence learning

It is widely accepted that vision plays an essential role in acquiring and linking different types of sensory information during learning and development (Douglas & McLinden, 2005; Hatton, 2014; Hodges & Douglas, 2005; Holbrook & Koenig, 2000; Lewis & Allman, 2014; Lewis, Savaiano, Blankenship, & Greeley-Bennett, 2014). Therefore, the existence of a visual impairment is often associated with challenges in learning (Hodges & Douglas, 2005; Lewis & Allman 2014) by causing restrictions both on the quantity and the quality of information available to individuals (Bishop, 2004; Hatlen, 1996; Lewis et al., 2014; Lowenfeld, 1973; McLinden & McCall, 2002; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010).

Characteristics of visual impairment are a key influence on the degree of impact on development and learning. If the visual impairment is present at birth (congenital), it is more likely to affect development and learning than if it is acquired later in life (adventitious) (Bishop, 2004; Hodges & Douglas, 2005; Koenig & Holbrook, 2000). Therefore, "youngsters with congenital visual impairment start life without the primary sensory system that is typically used to provide contact with the environment, to understand space, to stimulate and inform movement, to understand oneself as separate from others, to reach out to others, to verify information, to receive feedback related to actions, and to provide input for developing a conceptual understanding of objects and their relationships" (Lewis & Allman 2014, p.15). Therefore, when children with visual impairment start school, in comparison with their sighted peers, they will have more limited knowledge about themselves, how the world is organised

and how it can be acted upon (Bishop, 2004, Bishop, Hobson, & Lee, 2005; Lewis & Allman, 2014; Lewis et al., 2014; Lowenfeld, 1973).

It is also crucial to state that although a visual impairment may seem to be a devastating blow to an otherwise intact child, intervention and appropriate support can minimise the delays caused by absent or reduced vision (Bishop, 2004). For many infants with a visual impairment, the other senses are able to take over the role of vision in providing information to the brain and this strengthens the quality of information collected (Bishop, 2004). Yet this process may not happen spontaneously, therefore, educational intervention must take place to provide the experiences that encourage the use of all senses.

Since the main purpose of this study is about schooling, this section will discuss the broader strategies on pedagogy for students with visual impairments at schools.

2.3.2 How to teach students with visual impairments: strategies

As discussed above, within the spectrum of need created by visual impairment, a key barrier experienced by children is “access to information” in order to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills (Douglas, McLinden, Farrell, Ware, McCall, & Pavey, 2011; Hodges & Douglas, 2005). Therefore, “access to information” is one of the basic and crucial key factors for the education of children with visual impairments. Students with visual impairments require teaching strategies which offer either enhancement or alternative presentation to access information (Douglas & McLinden, 2005; Douglas et al., 2011; Douglas et al., 2012; Holbrook & Koenig, 2000; Koenig & Holbrook, 2000; McLinden & Douglas, 2013, 2014). For example, to teach the concept of horse, a Braille reader may be given the chance to feel a tactile representation of a horse (an alternative access to the curriculum content) and a low vision reader given an enhanced picture of a horse with verbal description (an enhancement of the content) (McLinden & Douglas, 2014).

2.3.3 What to teach students with a visual impairment

Douglas et al., (2011) outline the need for children with visual impairment to access visual information and how this can be achieved in two ways: (1) providing children with “accessible” material in their preferred medium (e.g. large print, Braille) or (2) teaching children “access skills” (for example, through the use of a low vision aid, or other assistive

technology aids). McLinden & Douglas (2013) go on to describe these approaches broadly as:

- "Access to learning" – in which the child is provided with access to appropriate information in their preferred format so that they are able to learn about a certain curriculum area;
- "Learning to access" – in which children are provided with the necessary instruction or tools (means) by which they are able to access information independently.

Using the example of access to printed text, to offer access to learning the student would be given text in their preferred mode (such as large print or Braille); to teach access skills, they would be taught how to use a magnifier, scanner or a screen reader to access the material and learn independently (McLinden & Douglas, 2014).

The discussion so far stipulates that individuals with visual impairments need to be taught similar subjects with their sighted peers (e.g. maths, history) by making some adjustments both in teaching strategies and the way they access information. Yet it is also clear individuals with visual impairments have additional learning needs e.g. the Braille code instead of print code, and the efficient use of low vision aids to access normal print (Erin, Holbrook, Sanspree, & Swallow, 2006; Holbrook & Koenig, 2000; McLinden & Douglas, 2014). Douglas et al. (2011) indicate that a broad distinction between the mainstream curriculum (i.e. areas that require *modifications* in order for students to access) and *additional* curriculum areas (i.e. areas that require particular intervention strategies in order to develop skills) could be very useful when considering curriculum development, design and delivery for students with visual impairments.

2.4 The notion of an additional curriculum

The terms "core curriculum", "national curriculum", or "academic curriculum" commonly refer to a group of subjects and courses that form the basis (core) of a particular educational plan (Bishop, 2004; Holbrook & Koenig, 2000). An academic core curriculum would generally include a native language, maths, sciences, social studies and foreign language (Hatton, 2014; Holbrook & Koenig, 2000; Lewis et al., 2014), all subjects geared towards preparing students for the national goals of an education system in their country. Since education of children with visual impairment started in France in the late 1700s (Hatlen, 2000; Lewis et al., 2014; Wiener & Sifferman 2010), it has been recognised that children with visual impairment have unique educational needs and that they need to be offered additional instruction on top

of the national curriculum. For example, tactile codes (moon, Braille) have long been used as a means of accessing literacy in teaching students with visual impairments, and teaching these codes requires additional training.

The second area in which it was recognised that special instruction was needed for students with visual impairments was mobility (Hatlen, 2000; Wiener & Sifferman 2010; Wiener et al., 2010). Starting in the 1920s, guide dogs were used as mobility aids by some people with visual impairments, but they were not used by a wide population around the world. The Orientation and Mobility (O&M) field was developed further after World War Two to allow veterans who had become blind in the war to travel independently by using a cane; systematic training was delivered (Hatlen, 2000; Lewis & Allman, 2014; Lewis et al., 2014; Wiener et al., 2010). Starting in the 1960s, several O&M training programmes were established in the USA. Graduates of these programmes initially provided services only to adults but soon were employed by schools (Hatlen, 2000; Lewis et al., 2014; Wiener et al., 2010). By 1974, almost half the mobility specialists in the USA were involved in delivering services to the school-age population (Wiener et al., 2010). By 1970, instruction in O&M was firmly ensconced as a required course for students with visual impairments in American schools (Hatlen, 2000; Lewis et al., 2014; Wiener, et al., 2010).

Another important improvement in the education of children with visual impairments was the recognition of children who were blinded by Retrolental Fibroplasia (Hatlen, 2000; Lewis et al., 2014; William & Silverman, 2002). This forced the visual impairment field to distinguish between students who were blind and those who were partially sighted (Hatlen, 2000). Students with less than 6/60 vision were considered blind and instructed in tactile code despite the fact that they had sufficient vision to read print. This was due to the belief that they would lose their existing vision if they used it. Natalie Barraga's (1964) landmark study changed these practices by challenging the myth that using vision would make the eyes deteriorate (Allman & Lewis, 2014; Hatlen, 2000; Lewis et al., 2014). Because of Barraga's contributions to the field and her advocacy, educators were convinced not to use "sight saving approaches" in which children were encouraged not to use their eyes so that they would not lose the little vision they had (Hatlen 2000; Lewis & Allman, 2014). In addition, Barraga developed strategies to help students use their limited vision as efficiently as possible (Allman & Lewis, 2014; Hatlen, 2000; Lueck, 2010).

After Baraga's study, development of useful optical devices (e.g. magnifiers, telescopes) and an understanding of the relationship between usage of remaining vision and further sight lost was a crucial improvement in teaching students with visual impairments (Hatlen, 2000). Although in the early 1950s students with visual impairments were rarely given optical devices (including prescribed eyeglasses), with the increased understanding of low vision and visual efficiency, even very young children started to be given glasses and optical devices to enable them to use their vision effectively in a variety of ways (Hatlen, 2000). These developments led to the need for further education when teaching students with visual impairments, such as how to use their remaining vision at the maximum level and these new prescribed optical devices.

With the advancement of technology, new products, such as talking computers, have raised even more additional instructional areas for individuals with visual impairments. Sighted students can learn to access a computer with little instruction, but students with visual impairments need special instruction on how to use screen reader or magnification software. Overall, recognition of these distinctive needs of children with visual impairments has given rise to a number of curriculum areas which are considered to be either "over and above" the mainstream curriculum (Arter 2013), or areas which are outside the mainstream teacher's expertise (Spragg & Stone, 1997), and require input from professionals with specialist training, for example TSVI and O&M specialists (Douglas & McLinden, 2005). This illustrates a need for an additional curriculum in addition to the academic curriculum.

With recognition of individuals' additional learning needs some curricula were formulated. "Additional curriculum", "unique curriculum", "special curriculum", "extra curriculum", "blindness specific curriculum" and "the expanded core curriculum" name just a few (Bishop, 2004; Hatlen 1996; Lewis & Allman 2014; Lueck, 1999; McLinden & Douglas 2014). According to Bishop (2004, p.113), these additional instructional areas have a threefold purpose:

- to eliminate or minimise any possible developmental delays caused by visual impairment;
- to provide a variety of supplementary and compensatory skills that enable the student with visual impairment to compete on a par with their sighted peers;
- to help students with visual impairments to realise their full potential.

In short, the need for an additional curriculum that provides "vital competencies to ensure that students can access learning, gain independence and work in a medium that suits their

needs" (Palmer, 2011, p.913) is now widely accepted in western countries. The most widely accepted curriculum is the American "Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)", which is summarised below; see section 2.5.2 Areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC).

2.5 A key example of the additional curriculum – Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)

Essentially the literature I sourced is able to tell us a lot about what is happening internationally, which is one of the reasons I have chosen to focus on the USA. This is where the bulk of the literature has been produced and given that there is limited literature in Turkey, I will draw on American publications to guide my research to further develop a knowledge base. The next section discusses the development and uptake of ECC in the USA. Since the ECC is a widely used American term, it is also the one used in the rest of this thesis.

2.5.1 The development of ECC in the USA

The education of children with visual impairment started at segregated schools. Those early schools for the blind were very selective about which students they admitted as they were the only option for educational services for most children who had a visual impairment (Allman & Lewis, 2014; Hatlen, 2000; Lohmeier, 2005): their limited resources justified their decision to prefer students with more academic potential than others (Hatlen, 2000). Yet by the late 1950s, local school programmes for children with visual impairments were growing rapidly throughout the USA (Hatlen, 2000; Lohmeier, 2006; Lewis et al., 2014). These programmes mostly placed children in general education classrooms and provided support from the TSVI in a resource room. Similarly to segregated schools, an academic curriculum – the same as that for non-disabled students – was implemented in these mainstream schools (Allman & Lewis 2014; Hatlen, 2000; Lohmeier, 2006; Whitten & Zebehazy, 2003). These programmes were also highly selective in admitting students because they wanted to accept students who would be academically very successful in order to prove to everyone that students with visual impairments belong in mainstream schools and are able to be successful with their peers (Hatlen, 2000).

In those years, educators mostly focused on providing access to an academic curriculum because they believed that for students with visual impairments, who never attended a school for the blind, futures were bright; naturally, they would be a part of their community,

and assimilated into work, education, and social life (Hatlen, 2007; Holbrook & Koenig, 2000; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Nevertheless, it was soon recognised that although students with visual impairments did very well in learning academic skills and could certainly compete with, or even out-perform their sighted peers, they still faced great challenges gaining employment and in everyday life. A potential reason for this would be that crucial skills, learned by sighted students through casual observation, those necessary to live a full, satisfying life, had not been mastered by students with visual impairments (Hatlen, 2000; Lohmeier et al., 2009). Although this led to educators recognising the different educational needs of individuals with visual impairments, and attempting to meet these needs, they often failed to address the special and unique needs of students with visual impairments holistically and comprehensively (Hatlen, 2000; Lohmeier, 2009; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Therefore, in 1987, in order to meet the special and unique needs of students with visual impairments, Hatlen and Curry outlined "disability-specific needs" or "unique needs" of students with visual impairments (Holbrook & Koenig, 2000). This approach placed the emphasis on the need for students with visual impairments to live independently and productively (Corn, Hatlen, Huebner, Ryan & Siller, 1995). However, it is still accepted that many young adults with visual impairments require direct instruction in, and frequent practice of, the skills necessary to get and maintain jobs or to live independently or with as little as possible support (Erin, Holbrook, Sanspree, & Swallow, 2006; Hatlen, 2000).

Hatlen (1996), by using the term the “Expanded Core Curriculum” for the first time, proposed a well-structured curriculum that aimed to meet the unique educational needs of people with a visual impairment. According to Koenig & Holbrook, the term “Expanded Core Curriculum” was chosen intentionally to reinforce the idea that the additional skills taught to students with visual impairments need to be an integral and indispensable component of the core curriculum, not skills that are considered extra or for enrichment (2000). In other words, Hatlen made it clear that the skills delineated in the ECC are not alternative to the core curriculum but needed to be taught alongside the academic skills which are learned by all students (Hatlen, 1996; Hatlen, 2000; Lohmeier et al., 2009). In short, the ECC was developed in the USA, with the intention of producing academically successful individuals who are also fully able to be part of society. The ECC suggests that instruction for students with visual impairments should include all the traditional areas of academic instruction and also instruction in areas that are directly affected by a child's visual impairment (Sapp &

Hatlen, 2010). A summary of the ECC components and roughly what each component covers is summarised below.

2.5.2 Areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)

2.5.2.1 Compensatory or access skills

"Compensatory access is the ECC area often discussed first, not necessarily because it is the most important, but because it is perhaps the most critical for ensuring access to academic learning" (Allman & Lewis, 2014, p.15). "Compensatory skills refer to the skills that students with visual impairments need to access all areas of the general education curriculum at levels that are commensurate with their sighted peers" (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.339). According to Sapp & Hatlen (2010, p.339) compensatory and access skills include "concept development, spatial understanding, study and organisational skills, speaking and listening skills, and adaptations that are necessary to access all areas of the core curriculum". Access skills will vary depending on the needs of each child and could include learning to use "Braille, large print, print with optical devices, tactile symbols, calendar systems, adapted sign language, or recorded materials" (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.339).

2.5.2.2 Orientation and Mobility (O&M) skills

"O&M is the systematic way in which children and youths with visual impairments orient themselves to their environments and move as safely, efficiently, and independently as possible in those environments (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.340). "O&M concepts begin with understanding one's own body and progress to include all the concepts that are necessary to plan a trip in rural and urban environments" (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.340). "O&M instruction may address spatial awareness, body positioning, white cane skills, trailing technique, sighted guide technique, and route travel such as walking from the classroom to the cafeteria, office, or gym" (Haegele, et al., 2014, p.48). It also needs to be stated that although all areas of the ECC are seen as areas that need to be taught by a TSVI, O&M requires additional qualifications in many parts of the developed world. For instance, in the USA and UK, O&M skills often are taught by an O&M specialist, or a rehabilitation worker.

2.5.2.3 Social interaction skills

The set of skills and concepts which we use to communicate and interact with each other in everyday life makes up "Social interaction skills" (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). This area covers a

range of abilities, including basic niceties such as making eye contact and reading nonverbal cues via body language and facial expression (Brian & Haegele 2014). It also covers complex skills such as joining a group of peers in a conversation or asking someone out on a date (Haegele, et al., 2014; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). These skills and concepts are primarily learned by observation of other people who are engaging in social interactions (Haegele, et al., 2014), but "children and youths with visual impairments miss out on much of this incidental learning of skills" (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.340), therefore, they require direct and sequential instruction (Haegele, et al., 2014; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010) and modelling (Lohmeier et al., 2009). "Direct sequential instruction in social interaction skills will help children and youths who are visually impaired have more opportunities for social interactions and decrease the chances of social isolation throughout their lives" (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.341).

2.5.2.4 Independent living skills

"Most activities of daily living, which sighted people perform without thinking, must be taught to students with visual impairments – everything from personal hygiene and food preparation to financial management and organizational skills" (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.340). Often individuals without a disability can learn and execute these skills without much thought, but the majority of these tasks need to be taught to individuals with visual impairments explicitly (Haegele et al., 2014; Lieberman et al., 2014a; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). "Some of these independent living skills are part of the general curriculum for all students, but they are not usually presented in a sequential, organised manner sufficient for students who are visually impaired or provide adequate hands-on experiences for these students" (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.340). If an individual with visual impairments doesn't learn these skills it is hard to have a happy life.

2.5.2.5 Leisure and recreational skills

Leisure and recreational skills is another area of ECC. Sighted individuals might become interested in trying a new activity after seeing others participating, but unless they have been taught in an accessible way people with visual impairments are likely to be unaware of such opportunities due to lack of visual input (Arndt et al., 2014; Haegele et al., 2014; Lieberman et al., 2014a; Lieberman, 2012; Lieberman et al., 2014b). Therefore, "recreational and leisure skills for students with visual impairments must be planned and deliberately taught, focusing on the development of lifelong, enjoyable activities" (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.340). There are

many leisure and recreational activities which individuals with visual impairments could be involved in dependent upon their interests. These include: running, ice skating, swimming, bowling etc. Recreation and leisure skills which could be taught at school include sports, games, and physical fitness activities (Arndt et al., 2014; Brian & Haegele 2014; Lieberman, et al., 2012; Lieberman, et al., 2014a; Lieberman et al., 2014b).

2.5.2.6 Career education

"Career education allows students to understand different job opportunities through hands-on experience" (Lieberman et al, 2014a, p.242). Although some skills and concepts are taught to all students in vocational education, these are not sufficient for students with visual impairments. Sighted students have the very important advantage of learning about careers and work habits via observation (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Since students with visual impairments cannot learn through observation as easily as those with sight (Lieberman, et al., 2014a; Lieberman, et al., 2014b; Sapp & Hatlen 2010) they need to have first-hand experiences with various jobs and roles via properly offered career education (Arndt et al., 2014; Lieberman et al. 2014b). Such experiences will enable them to make educated and independent decisions regarding future employment. Career counselling, and training in job skills, would therefore fall into this area of ECC (Crudden, 2012; Lieberman, et al., 2014a; McDonnall, 2010; McDonnell, 2010; Wolffe & Kelly, 2011).

2.5.2.7 Assistive technology

This component of the ECC involves selecting and teaching the use of a variety of technology devices, such as using a computer, smartphone and tablet via a screen reader or magnification. "Technology equalizes the ability to access, store, and retrieve information between sighted people and those with visual impairments" (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.341). Furthermore, according to Kelly (2011), Lieberman et al. (2014b) Smith et al., (2012) and Wolffe & Kelly (2011) assistive technology makes it possible to access materials by people with visual impairment which are otherwise inaccessible. Assistive technology is therefore crucial to the success of such individuals.

Although assistive technology is often used to refer to the electronic tools that are designed to provide access to text and other learning materials, it is actually a much broader term. There are several different apps, items of software, and pieces of equipment which have been designed specifically for people with visual impairments and other tools which have

been developed for general use that can also be used by individuals with visual impairments. To use the variety of software and tools in assistive technology requires many skills and these need to be taught by a specialist in the education of students with visual impairments (Kelly, 2011; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010).

2.5.2.8 Sensory efficiency skills

The sensory efficiency element of the ECC covers the training that deals with the use of any remaining vision and all other senses to enable access to information and interaction with the environment (Lieberman, et al., 2014a). “Sensory efficiency skills include visual efficiency, auditory learning, and the development of advanced tactile skills” (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.341) as well as using sense of smell for access to information more effectively.

It is widely accepted that visual efficiency skills should be taught to students with any level of remaining vision by TSVIs and O&M specialists so that students with visual impairments are able to use their remaining vision along with all other sensory input in their learning process (Haegele et al., 2014; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010) and to promote their independence (Lieberman et al., 2014b; Sapp & Hatlen 2010). “One example is learning how to use touch and smell rather than visual cues to identify one’s personal possessions or one’s location”; “another example is the use of hearing and the other senses to identify familiar people” (Lieberman et al., 2014a, p.244), items or shops.

2.5.2.9 Self-determination skills

“Self-determination skills” is the last area included in the ECC by Hatlen and it refers to “a person’s right to decide freely and without undue influence how he or she wishes to live his or her life” (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.341). To develop self-determination, students with visual impairments must be provided with necessary knowledge and experiences. Therefore, “they must learn which choices are available to them, have the skills necessary to take advantage of these choices, and be given opportunities to make age-appropriate choices for themselves” (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.341). “Self-determination skills can include decision-making skills, problem-solving ability, self-advocacy, and goal setting” (Haegele et al., 2014, p.49).

2.5.3 Other examples of the conceptualisation of the additional curriculum

In the last two decades the ECC appears to have become an agreed vocabulary across North America to such an extent that different stakeholders (e.g. teacher trainers, teaching services, researchers and commentators) use the language consistently (Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2007, 2010). Nevertheless, there have been other authors who have used different language and slightly different conceptualisations of the additional curriculum (see Bishop, 2004; Douglas et al., 2009).

2.5.3.1 The Additional Curriculum in the UK

In the UK, similarly to the USA, there is an acceptance that students with visual impairments require a more specific curriculum and special instruction. This is considered to be "over and above" the mainstream curriculum (Arter & Mason, 1999; Arter, 2013), and requires input from professionals with specialist training e.g. TSVI, mobility officer (Douglas & McLinden, 2005; McLinden & Douglas, 2014; Spragg & Stone, 1997). Although these areas have been presented in a variety of ways by different authors, Douglas & McLinden (2005, p.30) describe the "additional curriculum" as follows:

- mobility and independence (e.g. body and spatial awareness, social and emotional development, travel skills, and independent living skills;
- maximising the use of residual vision (e.g. developing skills in using low vision aids for close and distance activities;
- maximising the use of other senses (e.g. developing listening skills and/or tactual skills;
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) (e.g. developing skills in using specialist assistive technology to access the curriculum;
- literacy development (e.g. through specialist codes such as Braille or Moon, or through print/modified print).

In the UK, the phrase "additional curriculum" is often used broadly to define the necessary skills which need to be learned by students with visual impairments (Douglas & Hewett, 2014). In other words, it is used pretty much like the ECC. Yet, it is important to note that the "additional curriculum", in the UK, is less comprehensive than the ECC. This can be interpreted in one of two ways. Possibly an additional curriculum is less accepted or under-developed in the UK when compared to the ECC. Or, alternatively, the additional curriculum could be interpreted as focusing solely on providing access to the academic curriculum,

whereas the ECC goes beyond this by equipping individuals with skills to be independent adults.

2.5.3.2 The special skills needed by a visually impaired student

Bishop (2004, p.113–114) conceptualised the "Special skills needed by a visually impaired student: Expanded Core Curriculum" as follows:

1. Sensory skills (awareness, discrimination, perception)
   a) Vision (when there is any useful vision), including vision stimulation and visual efficiency
   b) Hearing (including listening skills)
   c) Touch
   d) Smell and taste

2. Motor development (especially for infants and young children)

3. Concept development

4. Communication skills
   a) Early language skills
   b) Braille, when indicated (readiness, reading, writing, maths, foreign languages, music, scientific notation)
   c) Handwriting
   d) Typing/keyboarding
   e) Technology (computer use, electronic braille equipment, note-taking, etc.)
   f) Tactual/visual graphics
   g) Organisational and study skills (including library skills)

5. Social skills (non-verbal communication, manners, etiquette, personal interactions)

6. Self-help/daily living skills
   a) Food related (eating, food preparation, food purchasing, food storage)
   b) Clothing related (dressing, clothing purchases, clothing care)
   c) Grooming and hygiene
   d) Home maintenance/home care (house-cleaning, simple repairs)
   e) Time management
   f) Money management (shopping, banking, budgets, credit, taxes, consumerism)

7. Human sexuality

8. Using low vision devices

9. Leisure and recreation skills; management of leisure time

10. Career awareness/vocational choices/job readiness

11. Self-advocacy and accessing Information (beyond the educational environment); Problem-solving and Decision-making

12. Orientation and Mobility

Note: in contrast to Douglas & McLinden (2005): McLinden & Douglas (2014) and Mason & McCall (1997), Bishop (2004) used the phrase “The Special Skills Needed by a Visually Impaired Student: Expanded Core Curriculum” to describe the additional curriculum. Besides the name, the major distinction of Bishop’s concept is that it includes more areas and some skills are placed under different categories. However, it did not receive as much recognition and attention as Hatlen’s (1996) conceptualisation of the ECC.

2.6 Teacher preparation and ECC uptake in the USA

2.6.1 Teacher preparation in the USA

“Throughout the history of educating students with visual impairments, teachers have realized that the amount of instruction these students need is greater than the traditional reading, writing, and arithmetic curricula” (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.338). This recognition is the basis of the idea of the specialist teacher and precedes the idea of the ECC (Hatlen, 2000). So teaching these additional skills has been accepted as the responsibility of TSVIs (Erin et al., 2006; Holbrook, 2008). Although there is a significant improvement regarding the amount of training on the ECC being delivered to teacher candidates (to meet this need), there is still “mounting evidence that shows that teachers are not completing their professional preparation with adequate skills in teaching the ECC and are spending much of their time with students teaching academics, rather than teaching the essential skills of the ECC (Lohmeier, et al., 2009; Wolfe et al., 2002). Nevertheless, the adoption of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) in the USA led to a major focus on including more ECC training in teacher preparation programmes for TSVIs (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). IDEA “(2004) states that in addition to addressing academic achievement, Individualized Education Programs must address students' functional performance and meet each of the students' other educational needs that” are associated with their disabilities (Hatlen, 2000; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). “Although the ECC is not explicitly mentioned, the reauthorization clearly supports the provision of instruction in all the areas of the ECC, since these are functional and educational needs that result from a disability” (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.339).

Due to the acceptance that the ECC should be taught by certified TSVIs (and O&M specialists), the Division on visual impairment of the Council for Exceptional Children modified, revised and updated three position papers on the role, function, professional and

certifications of the TSVIs. In one paper, Erin, Holbrook, Sanspree, & Swallow (2006) made it clear that teaching ECC is the responsibility of TSVIs (whilst highlighting needs and issues of professional preparation and certifications of TSVIs). In another paper Ferrell & Spungin (2007) described the areas of instruction in which TSVIs must be competent and emphasised requirements in assessing and teaching ECC skills. Lastly, Silberman & Sacks (2007) outlined the supplementary areas of proficiency which teachers require whilst serving students with visual impairments who have additional disabilities. All three papers place a significant emphasis on the ECC. Moreover, the Council for Exceptional Children (2009) included all nine areas of the ECC in its list of the knowledge and skills that TSVIs need to have (Douglas & Hewett, 2014; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Although there are a number of studies illustrating that TSVIs candidates do not finish their preparation programme by mastering all ECC skills (see Sapp & Hatlen, 2007, 2010; Wolffe & Kelly, 2011), these steps illustrate that the ECC has been influential in designing teacher preparation programmes in the USA.

2.6.2 ECC uptake in the USA

There is a wide acceptance that ECC is very important for students with visual impairments as it enables them to develop the skills they need for an independent everyday life. Therefore, the teaching of skills covered in the ECC is considered one of the main responsibilities of TSVIs and O&M specialists (Allman & Lewis 2014; Erin, et al., 2006; Holbrook, 2008; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Lohmeier 2009; Lewis et al., 2014; Sapp & Hatlen 2010). Consequently, as mentioned above, the Division on visual impairment of the Council for Exceptional Children in the USA (2009) included all areas of the ECC in its list of the knowledge and skills that TSVIs need to know. Nevertheless, there are a number of studies indicating a lack of appropriate instruction on the ECC for students with visual impairments.

For example, Wolffe, Sacks, Corn, Erin, Huebner, & Lewis (2002) conducted a study to investigate whether TSVIs do actually teach the skills which are “deemed necessary for students to become confident, independent, and employable young adults" (p.295). They observed eighteen TSVIs and concluded that “itinerant teachers of students with visual impairments appear to be spending the bulk of their instructional time focusing on general academic skills, not on disability-specific skills” (Wolffe et al., 2002, p.303). Similarly, Sapp & Hatlen (2007)’s research gathered the views of TSVIs, O&M specialists and parents of children with visual impairments on the ECC. All educators stated that the ECC is helpful and important for students with visual impairments in preparing them for real life and

employment, emphasising that receiving high-quality instruction in the ECC results in a better quality of life. Some participants even stated that the ECC is more important than the academic curriculum. Yet they also reported that the ECC was not taught enough and therefore expressed their dissatisfaction.

Similarly, in another study, Lohmeier, Blankenship & Hatlen (2009) investigated changes in the perspectives of parents and TSVIs with regard to the implementation of the ECC. Though similar to the previous study, concerns around the amount of training that could be delivered was still present. Educators noted that they are professionally committed to the critical need for assessment and instruction in ECC skills, but factors often limit their ability to do so. The parents (57%, *n* = 23) also indicated a shortage of instruction on the ECC areas for their children.

Grimmett, Pogrund, & Griffin-Shirley (2011) found that the lack of instruction on the skills covered in the ECC was a concern for parents of students with visual impairments, with only 30 (49%) of the 61 parents who responded reporting that their children's needs in ECC were currently being met. 31 parents (51%) did not believe that their children's needs were being met in one or more areas. Only three parents listed a singular area of need; all the rest listed multiple areas, including three parents who reported that their children's needs were not being met in any area. Similarly, Jackel, Wilson, and Hartmann (2010) surveyed parents of children with CVI (Cerebral Visual Impairment) and when asked about their children's access to services or support for the ECC, most said that their children receive little ECC instruction and none of the areas listed in the ECC were rated as being taught by more than 35%.

Clearly, the literature illustrates that ECC is taught to a limited extent, and that some areas are taught less often than others. For example, Lohmeier et al's (2009) research indicates that technology was the most predominant area of instruction (22.9%), followed by social skills (12%), and O&M (10.8%) whereas the least likely to be taught areas were recreational and leisure skills (1.2%, *n* = 1), self-determination (1.2%, *n* = 1), and visual (sensory) efficiency (2.4%, *n* = 2). Similarly, Lohmeier's (2005) study showed that social interaction development and visual efficiency were the areas least emphasised in an American school for the blind. Agran, Hong, and Blankenship (2007) interviewed 187 itinerant TSVIs and approximately one third of them reported that they were not familiar with the term self-determination, while one third stated that none of their students had such goals on their Individual Educational Plans (IEPs).

In short, the ECC is well recognised by the educators in the USA, but some areas are still taught less often than others. Moreover, there are several challenges in teaching necessary aspects of the ECC at a satisfactory level. These barriers will be summarised further below. However, before that a brief literature review on the consequences of ECC training on the lives of individuals with visual impairments is presented.

2.7 The consequences of ECC training

For a fair education, a "level playing field" has to be created for everyone (Holmes, 1980; Olmstead, 2005) including students with a visual impairment. This level playing field could be experienced when the instruction and content of academic subjects is presented and assessed equally to all students (Lohmeier, 2007; Stainback & Stainback, 1996). Yet in order for students with visual impairments to have access to equitable educational experiences instruction cannot be restricted to the academic curriculum (Allman & Lewis, 2014; Hatlen, 1996, 2000, 2007; Lohmeier, 2007; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Olmstead, 2005; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Therefore the ECC is designed to allow access to the academic curriculum and go beyond it to address areas, skills and experiences that are crucial in developing independence of people with visual impairments (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). By focusing on these specialised skills, schools can provide opportunities which are ordinarily available to sighted students but not available to students with visual impairments, "giving them the experiences and opportunities their non-disabled peers are obtaining incidentally can assure a complete education" (Lohmeier, 2005, p.10). Without a sufficient amount of training in the ECC and opportunities to practice in real life settings, people with visual impairments anticipate facing difficulties in acquiring skills needed to be fully independent and active contributors to their communities. This section will discuss some findings from the literature regarding lives of individuals with visual impairments when they receive and/or miss ECC training.

One of the first consequences of not having enough training on the ECC is not being mobile without assistance. O&M instruction offers the skills and confidence to enable people with visual impairments to travel safely and independently (Dodgson, 2014; Lohmeier, et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010) and without these skills, individuals with visual impairments face challenges in their everyday life. For instance, people with visual impairments and their parents were interviewed about their perception of O&M by Higgins, Phillips, Cowan, & Tikao, (2009). Almost everyone agreed that O&M is very important and some of the people with visual impairments stated that a lack of O&M is disabling in everyday life and they

wished they had received O&M training when they were younger. When investigating the perspectives of individuals with visual impairments regarding travelling in the UK, Douglas et al. (2006) reported that an estimated 43% of people in the UK with visual impairment would like to leave their home more often. Similarly Pey et al., (2007) reported that 48% of their UK-based participants faced challenges when travelling by themselves. This limitation in travelling independently reduced the quality of their life.

Similarly, there is an association between lack of ECC training and isolation. Wolffe & Sacks (1997) found that individuals with visual impairments spend more time alone in their homes watching TV and listening to the radio whereas their sighted peers spend more time outside their homes. Likewise, students with visual impairments reported participating less often in recreational activities (Conroy, 2014; Lieberman et al., 2014a) which resulted in them spending more time alone. Holbrook, Caputo, Perry, Fuller, & Morgan (2009) conducted a study with 25 adults and found that adults with visual impairments are less physically active than the general adult population.

Its impact on independent travel and isolation means that a lack of ECC training also influences friendship and social relationships. In a study investigating the inclusion of students with visual impairments in the UK by Worth (2013) several students reported loneliness, isolation and challenges in maintaining friendships. They reported having fewer friends and often their peers did not want to talk to them. Simply, they found maintaining friendships to be difficult and often ended up developing friendships with undesirable kids at schools. Similarly, a study conducted for the Royal National Institute of the Blind estimated that 44% of people with visual impairments reported feeling “moderately” or “completely” disconnected from people and things around them and 94% experienced some kind of restriction to participating in community (McManus & Lord, 2012). In addition, Arndt et al. (2014) interviewed seven youths who also stressed the value of having independent travelling skills, as well as knowing practical skills (such as using a friendly tone) in order to be socially accepted.

Although proportionally as many students with visual impairments are attending higher education as their sighted peers (Marder & D’Amico, 1992; Ravenscroft, 2013; Test, Mazzotti, Mustian, Fowler, Kortering, & Kohler, 2009; Wagner, D'Amico, Marder, Newman, & Blackorby, 1992), the majority of American adults with visual impairment (75%) are not employed (McDonnell, 2010; McDonnall, 2013; McDonnall, 2014; McDonnall, Crudden, &

O'Mally 2015; McDonough, Stiken & Haack, 2006; Wolffe & Kelly, 2011; Wolffe, Ajuwon, & Kelly, 2013). Similar results were also found in the UK, (see Hewett & Keil, 2014; Hewett, 2015; Saunders, Douglas & Lynch, 2013) and Canada (see CNIB, 2005; Gold, & Simson, 2005; Gold, Shaw, & Wolffe, 2010). There are several different factors which might bear upon this high unemployment rate including the lack of accommodation at work, and employers being biased against people with a visual impairment, but one of the main causes is assumed to be directly linked to the lack of preparedness of individuals with visual impairments when they leave school. For instance, Douglas et al. (2009) and Douglas & Hewett (2014) found that mobility and access to information are seen as barriers to employment for unemployed people with visual impairments. In another study conducted for RNIB, Saunders et al. (2013), found that many areas of ECC (O&M, self-determination, compensatory access skills, sensory efficiency, assistive technology) have a close relationship to unemployment and readiness for employment. Similarly, in an analysis of the NLTS2 (National Longitudinal Transitional Study-2) data set Cmar (2015) found that individuals with visual impairments who mastered travelling skills were significantly more likely to be employed when they finished secondary school.

In addition, Test et al. (2009) and Wolffe & Kelly (2011) found that there is a strong correlation between social skills, assistive technology, job coaching, self-determination, O&M and independent living skills on the employment of people with visual impairments. Invitations to social gatherings were also affected. Similarly, Crudden (2012) conducted five focus group discussions with rehabilitation providers regarding the successful transition of youths with visual impairments from school to employment. Social skills, independent living skills, and O&M were stressed as being essential skills for successful transition. Moreover, Shaw et al. (2007) found that youths with visual impairment face many challenges in their daily life and when asked how they could overcome these problems 86 percent of the participants said that they needed to learn more about the ECC skills (e.g. assistive technology and advocacy skills). Clearly, the participants think the skills covered in the ECC would enhance their independence.

Based on the existing literature in the western world, it appears that if individuals finish their schooling and master ECC components, they will have a healthier transition to adulthood. In contrast, if ECC skills aren't mastered then individuals with visual impairments will face challenges in many areas of their everyday life including remaining dependent, not being able to travel independently, and experiencing barriers to their socialising and employment.

Since the ultimate aim of a high-quality education is to equip children with the skills and knowledge they need to contribute to society (Erin et al., 2006; Holbrook, 2008; Holbrook & Koenig, 2000), it is crucial to recognise the value of ECC (McDonough, Stiken & Haack, 2006) and offer training in it to students with visual impairments. However, there is not much research from Eurasia or the Middle East and less still from Turkey. This raises the question of how ECC is recognised and taught (if at all) in those areas and how this influences the lives of individuals with visual impairments in Turkey. This research was undertaken to reveal answers to these questions.

2.8 Barriers to teaching ECC

As illustrated in sections "2.6.2. ECC uptake in the USA" and "2.7. The consequences of ECC training", there is mounting evidence to show that not enough teaching is offered in the ECC areas to students with visual impairments and this leads to several challenges in their everyday life (e.g. remaining dependent, social isolation, unemployment). According to the literature, it appears that there are several different factors which are preventing the effective teaching of the ECC. Some of these factors are summarised below.

2.8.1 Teachers' perspectives on the ECC and its value

One of the most important enablers of, or barriers to, teaching \ ECC is teachers' perspectives regarding the needs of individuals with visual impairments and the role ECC takes in meeting these needs. Since teachers are the ones who implement the curriculum, their attitude is crucial in making sure the curriculum achieves its goals (Coenders, Terlouw, & Dijkstra, 2008). "For too many years, educators have behaved as though they were unaware of the unique and specialized needs of blind and visually impaired students" (Hatlen, 1996, p.30). Until the late 1990s, teachers did not understand the value of the ECC and did not see teaching it as part of their job description (Hatlen, 1996, 2000, 2007; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Therefore, for many years, they found different excuses not to teach it (Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). This caused a modern tragedy: too many people exiting the educational system to live isolated and troubled lives (Hatlen, 1996). After much effort, the majority of teachers (at least in the USA) accepted the importance of the ECC and their role in teaching it (Hatlen, 2000). Current studies conducted with educators confirm this change in their attitude; they found a significant improvement in teachers' attitudes and commitment to teaching ECC (see Brown & Beamish, 2012; Lewis et al., 2014;

Lieberman et al., 2014a; Lieberman et al., 2014b; Lohmeier 2009; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Palmer, 2005, 2006, 2011; Sapp & Hatlen, 2007, 2010).

In addition, it was found that the perspectives of other teachers and school staff regarding the ECC are crucial in promoting independence. For instance, Palmer (2011) found that TSVIs and O&M instructors think that members of the Department of Education and teachers across regular education (in Australia) do not understand the philosophy of the ECC and consider the ECC to be in competition with the regular school curriculum. Similarly, Correa-Torres & Howell (2004); Ferrell & Correa-Torres (2004) and Rude et al., (2005) state that parents and educators overwhelmingly stress that heads of schools are not well-informed about appropriate services for students with visual impairments and this causes difficulties in teaching ECC. In short, including TSVIs and other educators, school staff attitudes towards students with visual impairments and the ECC seem crucial with regard to receiving ECC training.

2.8.2 Time

In the literature, one of the most frequently reported restrictions concerning the level and amount of ECC instruction TSVIs (and O&M specialists) could deliver to their students is time (Allman & Lewis, 2014; Brown & Beamish, 2012; Hatlen, 1996, 2000; Hatton, 2014; Lieberman et al., 2014a; Lewis & Allman, 2014; Lewis et al., 2014; Lohmeier, et al., 2009; Palmer, 2011; Wolffe et al., 2002). This is especially true if a TSVI has a large caseload and a sizable geographic area to cover (Hatlen, 2000).

Lohmeier et al. (2009) conducted a study on professionals' views of the National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with visual impairment, including those with multiple disabilities and the ECC. Most educators said they did not have enough time to teach the ECC. Similarly, Agran et al. (2007), Kelly (2009), Morris & Sharma (2011), Wolffe & Kelly (2011), and Wolffe, Ajuwon, & Kelly, (2013), found that the TSVIs and O&M specialists spent so much of their time teaching the academic curriculum and compensatory skills that they didn’t have enough time to teach all components of the ECC.

However, ECC training is not only for TSVIs – other teachers need to be involved, including Physical Education teachers, as they have a crucial role in delivering and supporting ECC training (Arndt, et al., 2014; Brian & Haegele, 2014; Lieberman et al., 2014a; Lieberman et al., 2014b). Nevertheless, Conroy (2012) found that the primary resource physical education

teachers needed whilst working with students with visual impairments was time; time to plan, time to teach concepts and skills and time to collaborate with other teachers including TSVIs.

Hatlen (1996) also acknowledges the difficulty in teaching all the ECC skills and highlights the shortage of time for TSVIs. However, he also stresses that educators should advocate for sufficient time so that they can teach the all ECC skills. “Programming that appropriately addresses all the educational needs of blind and visually impaired students must assume that most students will need sizable periods of time in order to master the competencies required in the expended core curriculum. If the profession does not demand that this time be made available, it has done a disservice to students with visual impairments, and may disable them in their efforts to successfully transition from school to adulthood” (Hatlen, 1996, p.31–32).

2.8.3 Accountability and academic priorities

As mentioned earlier (in section 2.5.1. The development of ECC in the USA), historically schools serving students with visual impairments focused on academic skills to prove that students with visual impairments could learn as much as their sighted peers. Although later on some schools started to offer more training on blindness-specific skills such as O&M, largely because of accountability mandates and state standards, other schools for the blind again shifted their attention onto academic skills and paid less and less attention to ECC skills (Lohmeier, 2006). For instance, the Governor Morehead School for the Blind in North Carolina, the first school for the blind to be held accountable for state standards, underwent the same transition process as all North Carolina public schools: “by 2003, this specialized school reflected the ramifications of being driven by academic priorities and not balanced with an expanded core curriculum” (Lohmeier, 2006, p.10). Therefore, this particular school for the blind, and other schools prioritised academic curriculum whilst neglecting the ECC skills “due to the mandates of accountability” (Lohmeier, 2006, p.10). “Some have become more like public schools, limiting their ability to offer more specialized curriculum than public schools can, including the full spectrum of the Expanded Core areas” (Lohmeier, 2006, p.11). Moreover, Douglas & Hewett (2014) note that “embedding an appropriate ECC within young people’s educational experience is critical” (p.94), but go on to note that “educational systems which emphasise national assessments for the purposes of accountability [...] are in danger of narrowing the curriculum at the expense of disability-specific curriculum areas” (p.96), and therefore making this balance even harder for educators to achieve. The situation seems to be similar in Turkey. For instance, Altunay-Arslantekin (2015) states that in two

schools for the blind in Ankara the educational focus is solely on teaching the academic curriculum and does not include any systematic instructional activities to promote the independent travelling abilities of students with visual impairments.

Similarly to the situation in schools for the blind, the literature indicates that TSVIs serving students in mainstream schools spend the majority of their time teaching academic subjects (Ferrell & Correa-Torres, 2004; Wolffe et al., 2002, 2013) with little time allocated to teach areas of the ECC. Brown & Beamish, (2012), Grimmett et al., (2011), Lieberman et al., 2014a), Lieberman et al., (2014b), and Wolffe et al., (2002, 2013) all concluded that teachers who are serving students with visual impairments appear to be spending most of their instructional time focusing on general academic skills and other duties and not ECC skills. In short, due to the accountability mandate regarding academic skills, educators find it difficult to include any ECC goals in their practice (Palmer, 2011), despite the evidence that ECC is critical for students with visual impairments' success whilst in school and after graduation.

2.8.4 A shortage of specialist TSVIs and large caseloads

A major problem with regard to the amount of ECC training received by students with visual impairments is the critical shortage of TSVIs and O&M instructors (Correa-Torres & Howell, 2004; Griffen-Shirley et al., 2004; Lohmeier, 2005; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010; Zhou, Parker, Smith & Griffen-Shirley, 2011). Due to this shortage, existing TSVIs have to serve many more students than recommended. The key stakeholders who participated in developing the National Plan for Training Personnel to Serve Children With Blindness and Low Vision (in the USA), recommended a caseload of eight for a TSVI and "the same number of O&M specialists" (Mason & Davidson, 2000, p.30) to appropriately serve students who have visual impairment (Corn, Hatlen, Huebner, Ryan, & Siller, 1995). However, educators are serving many more students than this. For example, Kirchner & Diament (1999) reported that the average caseload for TSVIs was fourteen students. Griffin-Shirley, et al. (1999) surveyed dual certified O&M specialists and TSVIs and their average caseload was eighteen students. In later research, Griffen-Shirley et al. (2004) reported averages of 22 students for each TSVI. In Victoria, Australia, 20 TSVIs were hired to serve approximately 500 children, their families and teachers (Robinson, 2010). Morris & Sharma (2011) found that their participants had more than 20 students on their caseloads.

It is important to note that only considering the number of students with visual impairments may not be an appropriate way to decide an appropriate caseload for an educator. Lewis &

Allman (2014) state that when deciding what is an appropriate caseload for a specific TSVI, time for travel, documenting service delivery, non-teaching activities, and the direct teaching of compensatory and functional academic skills (and ECC) all need to be considered. Griffen-Shirley et al. (2004) recommend that caseloads should be based on the individual needs of students with visual impairments. For example, a new Braille learner would require much more time than a student who might be using large print. If students have just started school and will be Braille readers, even a few of them may be too many for a TSVI to serve properly. In short, the literature suggests that there is a worldwide shortage of specialists and there is a need to hire more TSVIs to ensure that all students are served properly.

2.8.5 Teachers' knowledge

As illustrated under the "2.6. Teacher preparation and ECC uptake in the USA" section, there is clear evidence that TSVI candidates are not receiving enough training regarding all components of the ECC in their teacher preparation programmes. Consequently they start to serve students with visual impairments whilst having limited knowledge. For instance, TSVIs who were responsible for designing and implementing transition and related services were surveyed and almost 33 percent of them were not familiar with the term 'self-determination' (Agran, et al., 2007). In another study, the participants were asked how knowledgeable they think their fellow professionals were with regards to ECC, the results proved that most of the content was known (40.43%); some of the content was known (27.66%); none of the content was known (17.02%); and all the content known (14.89%) (3 responses were left unanswered – Lohmeier, et al., 2009). Blankenship collected data during her interactions with TSVIs (2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d; 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; 2008a, 2008b) regarding effective instructional practices for the ECC (as cited in Lohmeier et al., 2009). The majority of the participants indicated that they need to improve their knowledge on how to deliver ECC (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Morris & Sharma (2011) found that TSVIs did not have sufficient training and that they complained about a lack of university programmes to prepare TSVIs in Victoria, Australia.

On the other hand, Kesiktaş & Akçamete (2011) collected data from 224 TSVIs across Turkey and found that the TSVIs who worked in PSECs claimed that they had not gained the necessary knowledge and skills to do so during their teacher preparation and pre-service training. Moreover, the results revealed that the participants suggested a number of knowledge and skill areas (Including the need for more training in teaching academic and non-academic skills) to be covered in their pre-service programme. This finding indicates that

participants did not believe they had acquired the knowledge and skills for working with students with visual impairments efficiently and that they were therefore not able to practice these knowledge and skills effectively in the field. Moreover, Altunay-Arslantekin (2015) states TSVIs who are required to have dual certification in Turkey do not master O&M skills during their preparation programme. She added this resulted in students with visual impairments not being properly taught O&M skills.

Furthermore, under some circumstances, a specific qualification is not legally mandated for people to work as TSVIs (Hobson, 2008; Morris & Sharma, 2011). Similarly, as discussed earlier, there is evidence illustrating that students with visual impairments are served in Turkey by educators without a specialisation in visual impairment (see Akkök, & Zelloth, 2010; Ataman, 2005; Citil, 2007; Eres, 2010; Enc, 2014; Kucukahmet, 2007; Ozyurek, 2008). Given the complexity of the TSVIs' role, responsibility and the unique educational needs of children with visual impairment, it is surprising that educators are not required to have a specialist qualification (Morris & Sharma, 2011).

In addition to TSVIs' poor training, it is also reported that the knowledge of other teachers serving students with visual impairments (e.g. Physical Education and classroom teachers) acts as a barrier to teaching ECC (Conroy, 2012; Lieberman et al., 2014a; Lieberman et al., 2014b; Morris & Sharma, 2011). Therefore, it is recommended that all teachers are offered some training with regards to ECC (Conroy, 2012; Lieberman et al., 2014a; Lieberman et al., 2014b; Morris & Sharma, 2011; Palmer, 2005, 2011).

2.8.6 Funding

Linked to a shortage of time and a shortage of qualified specialist personnel, limited funding seems to be another barrier to teaching ECC. For example, if there was more available funding then it is likely that more specialist educators could be hired to serve and teach ECC to students with visual impairments. Palmer (2011) found similar results and concluded that funding is an issue in teaching ECC. Morris & Sharma (2011) also reported that TSVIs think funding limits their practice and restricts resources for students with visual impairments: for example, computer programs such as JAWS for Windows screen reading software can be prohibitively expensive (Morris & Sharma, 2011). If funding is limited, necessary devices may not be offered to students with visual impairments and no training will therefore be delivered in these areas. However, it's not only the TSVIs and O&M specialists, but also other educators serving students with visual impairments – including Physical Education teachers

– that stress the need for additional resources for adapting equipment and modifying activities and materials (see Conroy, 2012). It appears that having the necessary financial resources to hire more specialist teachers and purchase the necessary tools, might increase the possibility of offering ECC training and therefore preparing individuals with visual impairments for life as independent adults.

2.8.7 Performing different duties

There are a number of studies indicating that TSVIs perform several other duties besides teaching ECC skills and academic skills, and the performance of such will limit their abilities in teaching ECC. For instance, Brown & Beamish (2012) found that the paperwork involved, the sharing of information and the need to provide specialist support to regular classroom teachers still takes up too much time for TSVIs – time which could be better spent on direct instruction. Similarly, Wolffe et al. (2002), Griffen-Shirley et al. (2004), Lohmeier (2009) and Zhou et al. (2011) illustrated that TSVIs spend a large portion of their time on duties other than teaching the skills in the ECC, especially doing paperwork and other non-instructional duties. Although some of these duties – for example collaboration with school staff, parents and outside agencies – are often accepted as being part of the job of specialist teachers (Farrenkopf & McGregor, 2000; Friend, 2005), having large caseloads and performing several duties reduces the time TSVIs can spend on their core work, addressing areas of the ECC (Dinnebeil et al., 2006; Morris & Sharma, 2011).

2.8.8 Parents/family

The inclusion of family members in curriculum planning and the implementation process is essential because parents should be able to provide teachers with ideas relating to the family's and child's interests outside the school environment (Columna, Pyfer, Senne, Velez, Bridenthrall, & Canabal, 2008; Perkins, Columna, Lieberman, & Bailey, 2013). They can also reinforce instruction given in school by practicing skills with their child in the non-stressful home environment (Brian & Haegele, 2014; Lieberman et al., 2014b). However, the knowledge of parents regarding the ECC may not always be complete. For instance, Lohmeier et al. (2009) conducted a study to gather the perspectives of parents and TSVIs regarding the implementation of the ECC. The primary exposure of parents to ECC before reading the cover letter that accompanied the survey was minimal: no exposure (60%, n = 24) and not certain (5%, n = 5). Similarly, Morris & Sharma (2011) interviewed seven TSVIs in Victoria, Australia. According to those participants, parents did not know much about their

children's needs and therefore, they hinder independence by over-protecting, over-helping and asking for inappropriate instruction. If parents are aware of the ECC and its role in developing independence and could advocate for appropriate training and reinforce the ECC skills, children with visual impairments would be more able to master ECC skills and live a fulfilled life. Although, based on these two studies, it appears that if their understanding of the priorities differs from that of the educators, parents could also hinder the independence of their children.

In summary, success in school goes beyond ensuring that students are able to pass their courses and graduate from schools on time (Holbrook & Koenig, 2000; Sapp & Hatlen; 2010). "Children and youths with visual impairments deserve the opportunity to have full, rich lives that include good educations, strong social lives, meaningful careers, and the ability to live and travel independently" (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.346–347) and the ECC has been recognised as a powerful resource to do this. Nevertheless, literature suggests there might be several challenges in delivering ECC to students with visual impairments and this influences their lives significantly. There is not much literature considering if the situation is similar in Turkey and this study will seek an explanation of enablers for and barriers to teaching the ECC in Turkey.

2.9 Alternative and nuanced views of the additional curriculum

2.9.1 Potential tensions between the additional curriculum and concepts of inclusion and disability rights

After a long period of being denied access to the education system, students with visual impairments began to be educated in mostly segregated schools in the late 1770s in France (Hatlen, 2000). Such segregated schooling followed in the USA and other western countries later. Since then, people with disabilities, their parents and organisations have fought for inclusive education. The fight led to considerable progress on inclusion of these students at mainstream schools (Greenstein, 2013, 2014) and an inclusive education reform agenda built on a human rights approach (Barton & Armstrong, 2007; Florian, 2008). This reform was primarily concerned with creating a non-discriminatory and socially just environment for students with SEN; enhancing the quality of learning, participation and achievement (Liasidou, & Antoniou, 2013; Lingard & Mills, 2007). Although some developed nations produced and implemented local policies earlier (e.g. the USA, and England), the UNESCO

Salamanca Statement in 1994 was the first official statement to introduce the concept of inclusive education internationally in terms of a right to education in regular schools – especially for children with disability and difficulties -–and as a means to the establishment of an inclusive society across the globe (Greenstein, 2014; UNESCO, 1994). Inclusive education is, therefore, broadly defined as educating all children in regular schools which had previously excluded (Terzi, 2014) as related to the values of a democratic society (Norwich, 2013). As a consequence of the human rights movement, the majority of children with visual impairments (without any additional disabilities) are now educated in mainstream settings in many countries. Nevertheless, inclusive education, which was fought for in the past, is now being challenged (Greenstein, 2014).

Although the key aspect of inclusive education is "the ability of schools to function as communities of belonging regardless of attainment on any specific measurement" (Howe, 1996 cited in Greenstein, 2014, p.382), current inclusive schools mostly value a limited range of skills, in particular literacy and numeracy, to the exclusion of other crucial abilities (Feng & Sass, 2013; Lynch, 2001; Lynch & Baker, 2005; Greenstein, 2014). Florian (2008) states that "we know that what works for most does not work for some" (p.204). This view was behind the original development of SEN education as a separate form of provision; "some learners will need something 'additional to' or 'different from' that which is otherwise available to students of similar ages" (Florian, 2008, p.205). It is important to recognise the diversity of learners, and that one option may be better for some students than another. So, the currently popular phrase "All children can learn" is only true if instructional methodology is matched appropriately with each child's learning style, cognitive level, and unique needs (Bishop, 2004, p.50–51). Nevertheless, under current circumstances, it appears that due to implemented curricula and qualifications of teachers, inclusive schools seem to be far from meeting the unique needs of students with visual impairments. Indeed, there is a large amount of evidence showing "that many parents of pupils with SEN who study in mainstream schools are unsatisfied with the educational provision available to them" (Greenstein, 2014, p.379). Therefore, inclusive schools started to be a source of exclusion due to neglecting the development of practical skills and only focusing on academic skills. Consequently, as Terzi (2014, p.480) argued, the scholars who first embraced inclusive education "are now advocating a re-thinking of its theoretical stances and practical implications" (e.g. Allan, 2008; Goodley, 2011; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2011; Lloyd, 2008; Slee, 1997, 2011; Terzi, 2014: Thomas, 2012; Vos, Flaxman, Naghavi, Lozano, Michaud, Ezzati, & Abraham, 2013).

Therefore, many inclusive educators would advocate that all children, including those with visual impairments, can and should be educated in mainstream schools which should be flexible and able to respond to dissimilarities without any additional or special provision and curriculum (Liasidou, 2012; Terzi, 2014). However, many authors concerned with special education would advocate for a special curriculum and particular instruction to meet the unique needs of students with visual impairments as they consider inclusive schools unable to meet all needs of students with visual impairments without such provision (Lewis et al. 2014; Lohmeier et al. 2009; Sapp & Hatlen 2010). The debate, therefore, is between the "views defining inclusion as a radical social and educational project" (Terzi, 2014, p.480), and others who are committed to inclusion as much as possible' (Norwich, 2013).

In short, as discussed above, despite the view that all needs of students with disabilities can and should be met at a mainstream school without any special instruction or special curriculum, there are a considerable number of studies indicating that students with visual impairments have special learning needs which could not and cannot be met within traditional inclusive schools or inclusive curriculum settings without additional instruction or support; there must be specialist instruction (e.g. mobility, Braille) in addition to academic teaching. This presents a dilemma, i.e. should students with visual impairments attend inclusive schools or should they attend segregated schools to receive instruction on the ECC- especially since there appeared to be no or little support for students with visual impairments in inclusive schools in Turkey.

2.9.2 Cultural differences and the concept(s) of the ECC

A culture includes differing forms of knowledge, belief systems, languages, religion(s) and varieties of values within a society; therefore as a societal organism and as a concept it is broad and encompasses the status quo elements (Kisanji, 1995). The interpretation of why someone becomes disabled, how people with a disability and their parents should be treated (Groce, 1999) and finally, the expectation of society about individuals with a disability will differ in each culture. The ECC was developed in the USA, and despite being a relatively diverse country it is mostly dominantly Christian and white whereas in Turkey, most people are white Muslims with a mixture of European, Asian and Middle Eastern cultures. Consequently, without understanding these major cultural differences between the USA and Turkey, interpreting the results of this study would not be possible. Therefore, this section will briefly address some of the relevant concepts in terms of cultural differences (e.g. independence, gender and disability).

2.9.2.1 Independence in Turkish society

In describing cultural differences, Kitayama and Markus (2000) narrated that a small American company which wants to increase productivity instructed "its employees to look in the mirror and say 'I am beautiful' 100 times before coming to work each day" (online). In contrast, a Japanese company told its employees to start the day "by holding hands and telling each other that 'he' or 'she is beautiful'" (Markus & Kitayama, 2000, online). Based on these examples, they suggest that "people in Japan and America may hold strikingly divergent constructs of the self, others and the interdependence of the two" (Kitayama & Markus, 2000; Markus & Kitayama, 2000). The American example indicates that attention is paid to the individual self, and that society appreciates the difference of a person from the rest and the value of asserting the self, whereas the Japanese example stresses "attending to and fitting in with others and the importance of harmonious interdependence with them" (Markus & Kitayama, 2000, online). "These construals of the self and others are tied to the implicit, normative tasks that various cultures hold for what people should be doing in their lives" (Markus & Kitayama, 2000, online).

In many Western cultures, there is a strong belief "in the inherent separateness of distinct persons" (Kitayama & Markus, 2000) and therefore, the imperative of this culture is to become independent from others and to discover and express one's unique attributes (Kitayama & Markus 2000; Kitayama & Park, 2013; Markus & Kitayama, 2000; Miller, 1988). In contrast, in Asian culture instead of being "independent" being "interdependent" is more valued (Kitayama & Park, 2013). In Asian culture, "people are motivated to find a way to fit in with relevant others, to fulfil and create obligation, and in general to become part of various interpersonal relationships" Kitayama & Markus, 2000, online). Even among the most rapidly modernising sections of the Asian population "there is a tendency for people to act primarily in accordance with the anticipated expectations of others and social norms rather than with internal wishes or personal attributes" (Markus, & Kitayama, 2000, online). Since the majority of Turks consider Asia as their motherland, I would expect them to place more value on interdependence rather than independence. Indeed, based on my personal experience whilst living in the USA, Turkey and England, I think this view of themselves and others is manifested in the everyday life of most Turks.

2.9.2.2 An explanation of disability in Islam

One of the crucial factors influencing how a society interprets and conceptualises disability is its dominant culture. Lamorey (2002) describes that in a multi-cultural American metropole, 31 white-American female students between the ages of 19–25, studying in an undergraduate teacher training programme, were asked to supply a reason for disability and all gave a Westernised biomedical explanation of disability. “Even when specifically urged to relate a family story or folk tale about causes of disabilities, these teachers-to-be did not (could not) contribute any nonmedical responses other than ‘disability may be God’s will.’” (Lamorey, 2002, p.68). In contrast, a cohort which included 17 international students, coming from a variety of cultures, responded to the same question with a number of different reasons. “Their responses included beliefs that reflect the role of supernatural or cosmic causes, fate, magic, and religious beliefs, as well as biomedical reasoning” (Lamorey, 2002, p.68) Similarly, Diken (2006) illustrated that Turkish mothers have a variety of different explanations regarding their children’s disabilities with very little reference to biomedical reasoning of disability. At this point, it is important to take a closer look at Islam and its understanding of disability in Turkish culture.

Disability in the Middle East is frequently considered to be caused by divine intervention or the pursuit of an evil spirit that is known as Jinn (Coleridge, 2000; Miles, 1995, 2008; Turmusani, 2008). Nevertheless, according to Al-Aoufi, Al-Zhou & Shahminan (2012) there are two broad different explanations of disability in Islam. For some a disability is a blessing, whereas for others it is a curse. The first point of view is that “disability has been described as an example of the need to be ‘fatalistic’ in the acceptance of difficulties in life; Islam requires submission to the will of Allah” (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012, p.206). Alternatively there is the view that “the deity, when sending babies to families, chooses a special family who will take loving care of the extra needs of the disabled child” (Miles, 2008, p.127).

The view of disability as a blessing is widely accepted among Muslims. Al-Aoufi, et al. (2012, p.212) state that in fact, several “Qur'an and Hadith narrations promise[s] both those who are in a disadvantaged situation, and those who are taking care of them, rewards, both in this life and in the hereafter, for their patience”. Moreover, Prophet Mohammed said that whoever guides someone who is blind in both eyes for 40 steps, will be rewarded with heaven (Özçelik, 2010). Indeed, this type of promise usually motivates people to support the disadvantaged, whether they are strangers or close relatives.

Although the view that a disability is a blessing is commonly accepted, occasionally the parents of children with a disability attribute the disability to themselves seeing it as a punishment on them from Allah (Hadidi, 1998; Miles, 2008) or God's bidding (Hasnain et al., 2008) and that they must be obeyed (Al-Aoufi et al., 2012). For example, the prophet Mohammed said to his followers that disability can be cured (Ghaly, 2008) by prayers (Özçelik, 2010). According to the Qur'an, "there is no disease that Allah has created, except that He also has created its treatment" (Ibn Qay'em, 2003, p.18). The following is an example of a prayer for healing that prophet Mohammed taught:

> "Allah, grant me my body, Oh, grant me my hearing, O Allah, grant me my sight, there is no god except You. O Allah, I seek refuge with You from disbelief and poverty, I seek refuge in You from the torment of the grave". (Al-Qahtani, 1989, p.21)

This evidence suggests that for some, disability does not exist if the person or his parents did not commit an unforgiveable sin; or even if a disability does exist a cure for the disability is possible if the person becomes a good believer.

2.9.2.3 Disability in Turkish culture

Many Turks converted to Islam in the 8th century after encountering Muslim Arabs (Baer, 2010), yet there is not much detail about how people with disabilities were seen in Turkish society before that time. According to Özer (2015), like many old societies (Spartans, Greeks, Romans), Arabs had a negative perspective of disability. They considered disabled people to be bad luck with the disability being caused by evil spirits and that it is a punishment from their gods. Therefore, disability had a distinctly negative connotation. Nevertheless, this perspective changed significantly with the arrival of the prophet Mohammed and the Qur'an.

Although the majority of Turkish citizens are Muslims many sources frequently and wrongly consider all Muslims as a single ethnic group (Jegatheesan & Witz, 2014; Mastrilli & Sardo-Brown, 2002) and their religion as monolithic (Jegatheesan & Witz, 2014; Joshi, 2006). Muslims around the world are, in fact, enormously diverse, consisting of people from different historical, political, cultural, linguistic, ethnic and theological backgrounds (Reinhart, 2003). Therefore, although many people from different countries would identify themselves as Muslim they will have quite significant differences in terms of their beliefs and practices. The Qur'an exists in its original form in Arabic, and the numerous interpretations are said to be

the interpreters' understanding of the holy text and therefore are not considered to be the text itself or an accurate translation of it (Bazna & Hatab, 2005; Jegatheesan & Witz, 2014). While the Qur'an itself is considered to be divine, its interpretation is based on human understanding and this causes practical differences. Therefore, in this essay I will use my experience of culture and religion to demonstrate my understanding of Islam and its manifestation within Turkish culture to create a perspective about disability in Islam and the Turkish context.

In contrast to Middle Eastern understanding, the view of disability being a curse or punishment by Allah is not accepted much in Turkish societies. Instead, disability is seen as a blessing which Allah gives to people who he wants to endure by giving them the chance to surrender and accept the difficulties of life (Al-Aoufi, et al. 2012; Miles 2008). Since Islam requires full submission to the will of Allah (Al-Aoufi, et al. 2012), the people who face challenges without becoming rebellious will be rewarded with heaven (Özçelik, 2010). Therefore, Allah calls Muslims to fully submit even when they face great challenges (including disabilities) and to take special care of individuals who are in need (Benzahra, 2002; Özer, 2015).

The Qur'an states that Allah made all human beings equal regardless of their ethnicity and Allah measures an individual's worth on spiritual and ethical development and not on physical attributes and material achievement (Bazna & Hatab, 2005; Benzahra, 2002; Özçelik, 2010; Özer, 2015). This suggests that Islam focuses on social barriers rather than the impairment itself. The essence of Islam's interpretation of people with disabilities "concentrates on the notion of disadvantage that is created by society and imposed on those individuals who might not possess the social, economic, or physical attributes that people happen to value at a certain time and place" (Bazna & Hatab, 2005, p.30). Furthermore, since this "disadvantage" is perceived as "created by society", Bazna & Hatab (2005) state that it comes as no surprise that the holy text "places the responsibility of rectifying this inequity on the shoulder of society, by its constant exhortation to Muslims to recognise the plight of the disadvantaged and to improve their condition and status" (p.30).

Keeping this in mind, Özer (2015) states that from the early years of Islam, wealthy citizens, together with the State, were mandated to financially take care of disadvantaged people. Muslim States followed the advice of the Qur'an and the prophet Mohammed in looking after individuals with a disability. For example, in 644CE Caliph Omar founded the first social care

system in history to look after orphaned and poor children; this system also distributed income to all citizens with a disability (Özer, 2015). This understanding was visible throughout the rest of Turkish history, including the Seljuk Empire and the Ottoman Empire.

Since several sections of the Qur'an state that Allah mandates the rich to give some of their income to people who are in need (Özer, 2015), people in Turkish society are often very willing to help individuals with a disability. Furthermore, since individuals with disabilities, and their parents, are accepted as special people who are chosen by Allah to have their faith tested to take a path which needs to be endured, society considers these people as being closer to Allah and whose prayers might be accepted by Allah over their own. This perception is quite different to Middle Eastern and mainstream American and Christian understandings whereby individuals with visual impairments are seen as being punished because of their evil behaviours.

2.9.2.4 Gender and Turkish culture

Although Turkish civilizations were traditionally patriarchal they had a very advanced gender equality compared to other civilizations (Mutlu, 2014). Nevertheless, Turkish civilizations were influenced significantly by Arabic traditions after they converted to Islam from their national religions in the 8th century. According to Ersoy (2009) in Turkish societies the gender gap was minimal; men and women had similar rights and responsibilities. Often sultans (both men and women) would be present in meetings and would make decisions together. Women were not covered like Iranian and Arabic women and multiple marriages were not allowed. In a divorce women would receive half of what they owned collectively, even if men had the final say in decision-making processes (Ersoy, 2009; Mutlu, 2014). In contrast to Turkish culture, in Arabic and Persian society historically women were viewed as a source of sin and not to be valued (Mutlu, 2014; Nicolau, 2014). Some parents even buried their daughters alive. Although Islam improved rights of women in Middle Eastern societies, it still seemed to be quite male dominant culture.

Turmusani (2008, p.76) states that "In Islam, men are superior to women and women must accept men's authority and obey their commands". Ibn Kathir (1996) interpreted this as men to be "the boss", having the authority and being entitled to discipline women. According to Turmusani (2008, p.76) "men's extra rights and superiority can be seen in Qur'anic texts in their power to divorce; polygamy; advantages in inheritance; and the right to take extreme measures in disciplining women such as enforcing Hijab on them and beating them", and he

adds that women are also in a disadvantaged situation with regards to pursuing economic and political activities. For instance, women need two witnesses in business transactions instead of one as for men in business transactions. Indeed, in the Hadith women are referred to as those who were created for the comfort of men and "merely as a vessel of procreation" (Turmusani, 2008, p.76). Moreover, at the spiritual level, women are portrayed as less spiritual creatures, therefore, they are not allowed to take spiritual leadership roles such as being an Imam, e.g. there has been no official female Imam throughout Islamic history (Turmusani, 2008, p.77). Instead, "generally speaking, women are being held responsible for the downfall of humanity, lacking spiritual materials and often referred to as harmful to man and as having an evil omen" (Turmusani, 2008, p.78).

When the conditions of women before Islam are considered in Middle Eastern societies it can be seen easily that Islam brought a revolution in women's rights. However, when Turks converted to Islam they gave up their concept of advanced gender equality and adopted Arabic traditions along with the religion. Since Arabs traditionally did not value women it appears that the gender gap became wider in Turkish society after many converted to Islam, with women frequently being placed in the home and being protected by the man. The main duty of women was, and (still is for many), to become a good wife.

During the last century of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey a major modernisation project took place. Through this agenda aspects of society that were influenced by Arabic traditions were forcibly transformed to emulate the ways of the Western world, which were then perceived by the Republican elite as being modern and enlightened (Kaya, 2000). Secularisation was an integral part of the State's "civilizing mission" (Combers 2007, p.28). By aligning and integrating many of Turkey's laws, policies and even cultural features with those of the West, the founding leaders of the Republic hoped to free Turkey and its people from the oppressive bonds of tradition. The secular Turkish Civil Code established in 1926 was inspired by the Swiss Civil Code and replaced the Sharia. It granted women equal civil rights, rights to divorce and inheritance, prohibited polygamy and made civil marriage a state requirement (Arat, 2001; White, 2003). Women were given the full right to vote in 1934 and in 1935 eighteen of the four hundred members of the Turkish Parliament were women (Arat, 2001; White, 2003). Nevertheless, it was not easy for reforms to reach rural areas (as they were beyond the elite urban bourgeoisie) and for many years the majority of women who were located in such areas were effectively excluded from the opportunities offered by the new legislation (Combers, 2007). Evidence of the

enduring underdevelopment in these regions includes the persistence of a bride price being negotiated in marriage arrangements, low enrolment of girls in school and high birth rates (Combers, 2007). Despite significant improvements in the last three decades, research findings prove that a gender gap still exists between males and females in employment, participation in politics and everyday life (Ersoy, 2009; Erman, Kalaycıoğlu & Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2002).

As presented above, Turkish culture is different to American culture in many ways (especially in terms of religion and gender differences). Due to the uniqueness of Turkey, there is no doubt that “independence”, “self-determination”, “self-advocacy” and similar areas of the ECC will have different degrees of acceptance in the layers of Turkish culture rather than blanket acceptance in American culture (where the ECC was developed). This study may reveal how these factors are manifest in Turkish culture.

2.10 Linking back to Turkey

In this section, I aim to highlight some important themes related to the Turkish education system that emerged from the literature review.

One of the issues with the Turkish education system is that there are no clear figures about the number of students with visual impairments (or, at least, existing ones seem not to be accurate). Although Melekoğlu (2014) and the MEB (2015) state that the number of students with disability attending a mainstream school has increased rapidly in the last decade in Turkey due to the inclusion movement, the number of students with visual impairments attending schools is still too low. As presented in the “2.2.3 School options” section, there are only 1,908 students with visual impairments attending mainstream school in the entire country. Similarly, only 1,208 students are attending a school for the blind. These figures are for the 2014–2015 academic year and suggest that from a total of 17,559,989 students (MEB 2015a), only 3,214 (0.0183%) had a visual impairment. This indicates that there are several students with visual impairments not in the school system, or not identified as such. On the other hand, although the majority of students with visual impairments are in mainstream schools, based on the literature, it seems that these students do not necessarily receive any special instruction related to ECC skills (see, Bayram et al. 2015; Çakıroğlu & Melekoğlu, 2014; Göl 2014; Melekoğlu, 2014; Şafak 2012).

The national curriculum refers to a set of academic skills which each child should learn before finishing compulsory education (Hatlen, 1996). It also centrally determines the approaches and measurements by which students are assessed (Greenstein, 2014; Skrtic, 1995). Although most national curricula demonstrate similarities such as maths, language, science, social studies etc., each country's curriculum is shaped around its local culture. Some countries' curricula are less prescriptive, for example Ireland, whereas others are more controlled (such as England) (Douglas et al., 2009). Turkey is one of the countries which has a highly prescriptive and controlled national curriculum. According to the MEB (2015), regardless of a school's location it is to ensure that it implements and teaches the same subjects at the same level as other schools; the national curriculum not only dictates which topics will be taught but it also prescribes when they should be taught. Although this assists in teaching consistency and conducting the national tests in an efficient manner, it can cause challenges when meeting the additional needs of students with SEN.

According to the MEB (2015b), a traditional curriculum, which is implemented in regular schools, should also be implemented in SEN schools and classrooms. Nevertheless, it also states that this should be based on the students' characteristics and needs, with adaptations being made to the curriculum without compromising it significantly. Articles 14, 15, 19, and 23 of the Turkish Disability Act (2005) state that students who have SEN are entitled to receive special educational support to assist them with achieving the aims of the school they are attending; therefore, they can receive either individual or small group instruction. For those who are of compulsory schooling age and cannot attend an educational institution, regardless of their abilities, training to prepare them as independent individuals and meet their educational needs would be offered. It is also indicates that based on their needs and desires, instruction to prepare them for employment could be offered. What is interesting is that in the legislation, independent training and transition services are included for students who are severely disabled and cannot attend school; however, there is no referral to promoting independence for individuals who can attend school. One of the reasons for this might be that when the legislation was written, only students with intellectual disabilities – rather than those with other types of disabilities e.g. visual impairment – were considered severely disabled. This meant that there was an expectation that all students who do not have severe intellectual disabilities can learn to be independent via incidental learning. Yet this view misses the additional needs of students with visual impairments and means that the national curriculum does not contain a notion of an additional curriculum for students with visual impairments. Since the ECC is not included and assessed in the national

accountability, teachers might see their role as teaching only the academic curriculum that they are mandated to teach rather than including areas of the ECC. Since the national curriculum is quite strict in Turkey, in contrast to the USA, it could be difficult to articulate a process of real inclusion to meet the needs of students with SEN.

With an exception of an Altunay-Arslantekin (2015) study investigating O&M skills of students at schools for the blind, no empirical studies researching the “additional curriculum”, the ECC or school outcomes (independence) were found as part of this literature review. Furthermore, whilst reading through current literature regarding the Turkish context I have not encountered any term referring to an additional curriculum or the ECC. The exception is the “Destek Ogretim Programi” (support instruction curriculum). This curriculum is implemented only at PSEC and includes maths, Turkish and independent living skills. Nevertheless, only one third of the time is allocated to teaching independent living skills. Furthermore, there is not any such instruction at either schools for the blind or in mainstream schools.

In Turkey, professional standards for TSVIs were developed by the MEB in collaboration with universities in 2008, and these standards implemented pre-service and in-service training programmes (Kesiktaş & Akçamete 2011). These standards contain five domains: communication and social skills; modifying the curriculum; collaboration with the school, family, and other professionals; behavioural management; and getting involved in professional development activities (MEB, 2008). When these standards are examined, there is no direct reference to a concept of ECC. Among the ECC areas, only “communication and social skills” were included as areas that teachers should have knowledge on. There is no reference to other areas of the ECC including O&M, or assistive technology.

Furthermore, Kesiktaş & Akçamete (2011) collected data from 224 TSVIs across Turkey regarding competencies of TSVIs on these standards. The findings of the study pointed out that the implementation of the standard regarding social skills is ranked as the least practised. Participants' opinions concerning working in RAMs also seem critical because TSVIs who work in these centres claimed that they had not gained the necessary knowledge and skills to do so during pre-service training. Moreover, the results revealed that the participants suggested a number of knowledge and skill areas (including the need for more training in teaching academic and non-academic skills) to be covered in their pre-service programme. This finding indicates that participants did not believe that they acquired the

knowledge and skills for working with students with visual impairments efficiently and that they were not able to practice the relevant knowledge and skills in the field.

Although an additional curriculum has not been encountered in the Turkish context, there are some authors who advocate that skills such as assistive technology and O&M should be taught to pupils with visual impairment (Altunay-Arslantekin, 2015; Bayır, Keser & Numanoğlu 2010; Göl 2014; Sucuoğlu 2006; Şafak 2012). This might imply that there is a recognition of additional learning needs of students with a visual impairment, but no such curriculum has yet been formulated. Some papers concerning people with visual impairments and the additional curriculum areas in Turkey are summarised below.

Bayir, Keser & Numanoğlu (2010) state that assistive technology, which is an area of the ECC, should be taught to students with visual impairments. However, they report that neither of the schools for the blind in Ankara have any specialists to deliver this training. Therefore, students study at internet cafés which are owned by the municipality. These statements come from a published article on access to assistive technology for students with visual impairments in Turkey but there are a number of weaknesses in the article. For instance, although it states that data was collected from interviews, document review and observations, it is not clear which piece of information was received from where. The number of interviews, information about their participants and details about their observation is also not made clear. In another commentary article, Sucuoğlu (2006) reports that due to poor services in schools (regarding the additional curriculum areas), some associations for the blind are offering training to fill the gap left by the schools in promoting the independence of individuals with visual impairments and assisting them in finding jobs.

In one of the most comprehensive ECC-related research studies in Turkey, Altunay-Arslantekin (2015) evaluated some of the indoor O&M skills of 87 students with visual impairments who were attending primary schools for the blind in Ankara. The participants were asked to perform tasks such as trailing; upper-hand, lower-hand protective techniques and going up and down stairs using their canes and/or human guide techniques. This study revealed that although the initial techniques had been learned, none of the students with visual impairments had fully mastered cane skills, despite the cane being the most important mobility aid. Likewise, none of the students seemed to know how to be guided and how to guide someone with visual impairment by using human guide techniques. Altunay-Arslantekin (2015) suggests that the reason for these poor skills could be that (i) schools had

prioritised academic skills and were not teaching O&M skills, and (ii) there is inadequate teacher preparation for TSVIs. These findings are in-line with international literature described in the chapter. In this particular study, although the amount of training delivered directly to students with visual impairments is not clear, Altunay-Arslantekin's (2015) research findings provide a clear indication that there is a shortage of ECC-related instruction (particularly O&M training) being delivered at Turkish schools, which is concerning.

In another recent study which is not directly addressing the ECC, Yazıcı, Okçu & Sözbilir (2015) interviewed families of children with visual impairment regarding their future expectations. In this paper parents stressed that their children are unable to travel independently and always need someone to go with them. Although it is not stated explicitly, this signals a lack of independence-training at schools for these children.

Another interesting finding of the literature review is that there is a shortage of specialist educators; as outlined earlier, this is an issue which has been present from the very beginning of Turkish special education. Due to a lack of specialists, unqualified teachers have been hired to serve students with visual impairments. Some of these teachers were given short term in-service training whereas some were not offered any training at all (see, Çitil 2007; Enç 2014; Küçükahmet 2007; Özyürek 2008). Currently, there is only one TSVI preparation programme and there are not enough teachers trained by the programme to meet the demand in the entire country. Furthermore, similar to the findings from western literature, Altunay-Arslantekin (2015) states that TSVIs in Turkey do not master ECC skills during their teacher preparation programme and this affects the quality of education for students with visual impairments.

Despite such pessimistic findings regarding the education of Turkish students with visual impairments, the literature indicates that the legal base of special education is very comprehensive and it is at a similar level to many western countries (Akkök 2000, 2001; Çakıroğlu & Melekoğlu 2014; Eres 2010; Melekoğlu et al. 2009; Şenel 1998). In its implementation however, although there have been considerable improvements in the last decade, it seems that there is still a serious failure, and the reason for this does not appear to be clear.

Despite the significant differences between Turkish and western culture, the literature indicates that Turkish parents have similar expectations regarding the future of their children.

For example, Diken (2006) conducted a study with Turkish mothers of children with intellectual disabilities to understand their expectations of the education system. When parents were asked to state their future expectations of the education system they indicated the need for more individualised education programmes for their children and pointed out that they wanted their children to be less dependent on them and others in their daily life. “Most of them stressed the need of independent life skills for their children, and wanted to see their children know how to walk and talk in a group, how to read and write, how to use money and shop independently, get a diploma and have a job, and finally stand on their own feet with less dependency” (Diken, 2006, p.16).

Similarly recently, Yazıcı, Okçu & Sözbilir (2015) investigated the expectations and concerns of families of Turkish children with visual impairment. In this study, it was found that one of the biggest fears of the families was the future of their children. They indicated that their children are unable to travel and do tasks independently and they feared what will happen to their children when they are not present, especially after they pass away. Although it is not stated explicitly, their study suggests that parents do not think the education system is preparing their children to be independent. Another important issue raised by this paper is the over-protection exercised by parents and how society treats the children. Families complain about questions and comments they receive from society members about their children’s visual conditions; people try to help in a charitable manner and parents stress their frustration with this. These two papers (Diken, 2006 & Yazıcı et al., 2015) illustrate that although there is a difference in the way that Turkish and western cultures view disability, all parents would like to see their children be less dependent on others and maintain their own life independently. Moreover, Yazıcı et al. (2015)’s paper illustrates how community members might interact with a child with visual impairment and their parents which appears to be unique to Asian/middle eastern culture.

2.11 Conclusion

In this chapter I set out to identify research literature in relation to my broad research question: “What is the education system for and what skills and abilities should people with visual impairments be leaving with?” I was particularly interested in the Turkish context, and as well as describing some important contextual information (i.e. the Turkish education system and broader context, and definitions of visual impairment), I concluded the following:

- literature shows that there is a wide acceptance that there is a need for an additional curriculum to equip students with visual impairments with necessary skills so that they can maximise their independence. Nevertheless, there was very little literature from the Turkish context and little evidence of the existence or articulation of such a curriculum in that context;
- furthermore, I could identify very few studies concerned with areas of the additional curriculum from the Turkish context (e.g. Altunay-Arslantekin, 2015; Bayir et al., 2010; Kesiktaş & Akçamete, 2011; Sucuoğlu, 2006). Although these studies signalled a gap in the amount of ECC training being offered to students with a visual impairment they did not explore the implications of this in any great depth;
- throughout the literature, there are a number of research commentators highlighting advantages of ECC training on the lives of individuals with visual impairments. Likewise, there are a number of studies illustrating that individuals with visual impairments face challenges in every domain of their lives when they do not receive appropriate ECC training;
- across the literature, including from the USA, there is a strong advocacy for ECC training to equip individuals with a visual impairment with necessary skills. Nevertheless, I could not identify any research which described what kind of curriculum balance should be available for individuals with a visual impairments;
- finally, literature suggests existence of a number of barriers and enablers to teaching ECC across the world. Although there are some indications, I could not find any publication that illustrates extensive barriers and enablers for teaching the ECC in Turkey.

In summary, it is clear that a notion of additional curriculum is essential in preparing individuals with visual impairments as independent individuals. However, based on the literature very little is known about the situation in Turkey. Therefore, the study aims to better understand the Turkish education system and its role in preparing individuals with visual impairments as independent citizens. It follows then that my broad research question is legitimate. In the next chapter I develop that broad question into four related questions:

1. What is the balance of the curriculum content experienced by young adults with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?

2. What are the direct and indirect consequences of this experienced curriculum balance on lives of individuals with visual impairments as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
3. What is the 'ideal' curriculum balance which should be available for students with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
4. What are the barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum for students with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?

In the next chapter, "Methodology", I describe in detail how these research questions were addressed throughout the research project, and data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter starts by introducing the factors driving this research, before it explains the research aims and questions. It progresses into a discussion of different philosophical standpoints, elucidating positivism and interpretivism, and my interpretivist philosophical standpoint is explicitly outlined. The theoretical framework of the study and use of different frameworks, theoretical and policy research as well as inductive versus deductive research paradigms are discussed. In particular, the advantage of using inductive approaches for this project is explained. The conceptualisation of this research project, including justifying using my personal experiences to form the research questions, is presented. The chapter progresses with a discussion of validity, reliability, generalisability and reflexivity before moving on to discuss the choice of design and specifically the use of certain design elements. In this section the implemented research design, which is a variation of cross-sectional comparative design, is described, and the choice of data collection methods, e.g. face-to-face semi-structured interviews, and the data collection tools are also described with the reasons for the choice of semi-structured interviews and the schedules being discussed in detail. Following on from this, the samples for both Study 1 and 2 and data collection processes are described. The chapter progresses with a description of data analysis procedures used in this thesis – which is thematic analysis. Finally, the chapter ends with a short conclusion that summarises it and introduces the next chapter.

3.2 My decision to conduct this research and the research questions

As described in chapter 1, it was through my experience as a person with visual impairment within the Turkish education system, as well as my further education studies and professional work in Turkey, the USA and England, that I became interested in how the education system prepares students with visual impairments for life after school. This related to the formal qualifications students may achieve, but also concerned broader outcomes related to employment, independence, inclusion in the community and general life fulfilment. Such a focus arguably cuts to the very essence of what an education system is for, and how schools should serve students with a visual impairment.

We, as people with disabilities, often encounter people who make decisions on our behalf. Yet often these people make decisions on our behalf without having a specific understanding of what disability means and what the needs of people with disabilities are (Oliver, 2004; Quarmby, 2013). More specifically, in education, the research conducted often fails to include the views of people who are at the centre of the education system, i.e. students and educators (Le Fanu, 2014; Oliver, 2004). This study places people with visual impairments and their issues at the very centre by including both their views and the views of the educators who serve them, in order to answer the question asked earlier: “What is an education system for, and how should schools serve students with visual impairments?”

As I described in chapter 1, as a student with visual impairment who attended mainstream schools in Turkey, I never felt fully prepared to be independent as an adult despite attending school for eleven years. Whilst studying and after graduation from secondary school I knew there was a gap in my education but had no idea what it was. I was a person with visual impairment who could do virtually nothing without the help of others. However at that time, I believed that the only reason I was unable to participate fully in everyday life was simply because of my visual impairment. In other words, I was fully signed-up to a belief in an individual model of disability (see 2.1.3 “Models of disability and ICF” section for more details). I did not blame anyone or anything in my environment for the barriers to my participation; it was due – I thought – to my own faulty body.

However, after encountering the ECC for the first time, my opinion completely changed. The creator of the ECC, Phil Hatlen and colleagues, claimed and advocated that for independence, individuals with visual impairments should receive specific training on skills which the majority of people are able to learn incidentally. Moreover, the authors whilst advocating training in the ECC, stated that if appropriate training was delivered, people with visual impairments could perform most everyday tasks, such as shopping, cooking, cleaning and travelling independently without or with very little help from others (for a detailed discussion about the ECC please see chapter 2.) It became clear to me that my impairment was not the only reason for my limitations and inability to be an independent member of society. I knew that there were barriers to my participation in everyday life but, I began to understand that had I been taught these skills I could be as independent as people without a visual impairment.

I started to question my education and realised that I had never received any direct instruction in any of the ECC areas. This lack negatively impacted several areas of my life. Consequently, I became very interested in the experience of others with visual impairments in terms of how much ECC training they had received, how this training had changed their lives, why it had changed their lives and whether there were other people with visual impairments who had not received training on the ECC. Since my experience was only of a mainstream school, never having attended a school for the blind, I wanted to include participants with visual impairments who had experienced different school environments to learn about their perspectives and educational experiences. I was also interested in the perspectives of educators from different settings to gain an understanding of their experiences and rationale. Therefore I implemented two explanatory studies which aimed to gather both the views of individuals with visual impairments and the views of educators, in relation to my research questions:

1. What is the balance of the curriculum content experienced by young adults with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
2. What are the direct and indirect consequences of this experienced curriculum balance on lives of individuals with visual impairments as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
3. What is the 'ideal' curriculum balance which should be available for students with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
4. What are the barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum for students with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?

In addition to these research questions an important theme emerged from the data which resulted in the addition of the following research question:

5. What other factors influence the independence of individuals with visual impairments (other than the ECC and associated teaching) as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?

The first study collected evidence from twelve young adults, aged 21–35 years, who had a visual impairment when at school in Turkey. Nevertheless, gathering the views of individuals with visual impairments only provided one perspective regarding the achieved curriculum balance and the barriers and enablers to receiving training on the ECC. It was crucial to also gather educators' views as they are an essential stakeholder in the education system and would be able to provide a deeper understanding of what is going on in the system. Consequently, educators' views have been included as a second study.

The major aims of gathering the views of the educators were: a) to build a richer and deeper understanding of the issues from multiple perspectives; b) to have the ability to compare and contrast the findings from Study 1; c) to check if educators were familiar with the claims made by individuals with visual impairments regarding what was happening, or not, at schools; and d) to capture the challenges faced by educators, which might not be known to the students. Therefore, a range of educators who teach people with visual impairments were included as participants in the study: two lecturers from the only TSVI preparation programme in Turkey; two TSVIs working at RAMs and responsible for assessment; an itinerant TSVI; a subject (English) teacher; two classroom teachers at schools for the blind; two deputy heads at schools for the blind; two teachers from a PSEC; and an instructor from an ARC. Simply put, in order to have a deeper and richer understanding of what was going on in the education of students with visual impairments in different parts of the country, participants with different roles from across the field were included. The aim, instead of generalising the findings to the entire country, was to have an overview across different settings and stakeholders in the education system.

To summarise, this research project aimed to gain a better understanding of the balance of school curriculum content experienced by people with visual impairments and its influences on their life in Turkey. To develop this understanding, I thought that two stakeholder perspectives would be particularly important: individuals with visual impairments and the educators who teach people with a visual impairment. Understanding their issues may lead to recommendations about an appropriate curriculum content balance in the Turkish education system and the identification of enablers for and barriers to achieving this balance and prepare them as independent individuals.

3.3 Philosophical standpoint

Having conducted social research there are two main paradigms used by researchers to make sense of acquired knowledge – positivism and interpretivism. Each paradigm is based on different philosophical assumptions which guide and drive the research and influence the ways we perceive the world (Mertens, 1998; Thomas, 2013).

Positivist researchers believe that the social world and all related phenomena can be investigated using rules, standards and methods of natural science (Pavey, 2011). These researchers think there is a single reality that exists and their role is to reveal and discover the single absolute truth by distancing and detaching themselves from the investigated subject (Mertens, 1998; Thomas, 2013). The positivist approach is often quantitative as it highlights the value of validity, reliability, replicability and generalisability by using research methods such as experiments and large statistical surveys (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012; Mertens, 1998; Pavey, 2011).

An interpretive approach rejects most of the essential principles of the positivist standpoint (Thomas, 2013). The epistemological belief in the interpretive approach is that both the investigator and participants in the research are subjective players, and they both influence the research process (Pavey, 2011). Therefore, produced knowledge is a product of the interaction between the researcher and their social world and their interpretation (Darra, 2008; Johnson 2009; Maxwell 2005; Thomas 2013). There is an acceptance of multiple socially-constructed realities which could number as many as the number of people that exist in the world (Guest et al., 2012; Lyon & Coyle, 2007; Mertens, 1998; Pavey 2011). Moreover, an interpretive approach tends to be less concerned with validity, reliability, replicability and generalisability than the positivist approach. It is more concerned with the validity of participants' accounts and – instead of detaching the researcher and participants – with methods that encourage more personal interaction between the researcher and participants, so that participants can share what they really experience or believe about the investigated subject. Data is often collected from a small sample, rather than by using statistical techniques, and descriptions and explanations are used in the analyses. Research methods commonly associated with this qualitative methodology include unstructured or semi-structured interviews and participant observation (Mertens, 1998; Thomas, 2013).

Since I believe all people develop and maintain a subjective viewpoint based on their own experiences and that it is this characteristic that facilitates their understanding of their

environment (Johnson, 2009), I took the view that it was not possible to set aside my own perspectives and be fully objective. This view is at odds with a positivist approach and I have therefore taken up an interpretivist standpoint. The findings of this research represent my understandings of participants' experiences (based on what they thought they have experienced and what they shared with me) and my own interpretation of these narratives.

3.3.1 The theoretical framework of the study

As Hakim (2000, p.3–4) and Machrzak (1989, p.10–12) conceptualise, in relation to social sciences, there are two types of research: "policy research" and "theoretical research". There are not only important differences in the design of "theoretical" and "policy" research but also in their aims. "Theoretical research is concerned primarily with causal processes and explanation" (Hakim 2012, p.3) and the long-term aim is to produce social science knowledge. The intended audience of theoretical research is the relevant members of society, generally social scientists, who are considered to be able to speak the same specialist language (Hakim, 2012; Machrzak, 1989). Furthermore, they would generally be concerned with producing knowledge in order to understand, often within a single social science discipline framework (Hakim, 2012; Machrzak, 1989).

In contrast, the primary interest of policy research is knowledge for action, and its ultimate goal is in line with the dictum that it is more important to change the world than to simply understand it (Hakim 2012, p.4). As a consequence, the intended audience for policy research includes all the relevant groups of "client groups, policy-makers, decision-takers, public pressure groups, and others" (Hakim 2000, p.4). Because of the diversity within the intended audience, a language that is easy to understand is preferred so that everyone is able to understand the overall message, the research results and summaries of the key findings and then implement them (Hakim, 2012; Machrzak, 1989).

The purpose of academic research meanwhile has recently changed and the perspective that "the sole immediate task of academic research is to pursue knowledge, and that such knowledge is of value in its own right" has lost support (Hammersley, 2010, p.81). Instead, there is now an "emphasis on the pragmatic goals that knowledge can serve, and often a conviction that research can bring about significant change in society; indeed, that it cannot be justified if it does not have practical effect or political value" (Hammersley, 2010, p.82). Hakim (2012) went further and stated that policy research indeed covers a range of different types of research within its scope and can contain theoretical research as well.

Even though this study is more concerned with policy, conducting research without considering any theory at all may not be possible. According to Blaikie (2007), Gilbert (1993), and Thomas, (2013), there are two main processes for theory construction: deduction and induction. In deduction, theories are constructed prior to data collection, and the constructed theories are "tested" by use of the data obtained. Simply, in the deductive approach, hypotheses are constructed first, and later on, the collected data is used to prove or reject them. This is more associated with natural sciences and mainly uses a positivist approach. In contrast, induction is a process of constructing theories through data collection. For induction, data is collected first, after which a theory is constructed based on collected data. This type of research is more involved with descriptive research methods (Machrzak, 1989; Maxwell, 2005; Thomas 2013).

In summary, this study aimed to explore the current situation in the education of students with visual impairments in Turkey, the consequences of the achieved educational balance on their life, the barriers to and enablers for accessing the ECC, and what "ideal" curriculum balance should be available. Furthermore, as the researcher, I did not only aim to learn about the situation and generate theory, but also to come up with recommendations to inform the public and decision (policy) makers, to increase awareness about the needs of people with visual impairments and to advocate for improvements in the existing conditions. However, as stated earlier, due to the limited existing research on ECC in a Turkish context, (notwithstanding ideas based on my own experience of the education system), I was far from being confident about building a healthy hypothesis to test. Therefore, I decided to use the inductive approach, to collect data and seek to describe what was happening in the education of children with visual impairment in order to generate theories to explain why these things were happening. Theories would be based upon participants' opinions about what was going on in the field and why (and how I interpret their narratives). On the other hand, since one of the advantages of policy research is that it focuses especially upon descriptive research to explain the topic in detail, including the issue or problem, and assesses the existing policy and its capacity to provide solutions, I prefer to implement policy research with an inductive approach.

3.3.2 Positionality and its role in the research project

According to Maxwell (1996; p.25), a conceptual framework is "the compilation of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that support and shape the research". Thus, the conceptual framework of a study is itself a theory, or "theoretical framework" (ibid, p.25*)*

and it is created by the researcher. The construction of this theory is crucially important because it shapes the research design and allows the researcher to frame the research problem and questions and the reasons and methods for conducting the study (Pavey, 2011). Bryman (2012), De Vaus (2001, 2013) and Maxwell (1996, 2005) describe two main sources to construct a conceptual framework: a) existing theory and research which has already investigated and evaluated current literature in depth; and b) experiential knowledge which covers the personal and professional knowledge of the researcher (and/or someone very close to the researcher) about the area to be studied.

Traditionally, researchers' backgrounds and identities (including experiential knowledge and emotions) have been accepted as sources of contamination to the research process (Braun et al., 2014; Guest et al., 2012; Tillmann-Healey, & Kiesinger, 2001. It is therefore acknowledged as an influence which needs to be eliminated from the design (Lyon & Coyle, 2007; Robson, 2011; Thomas, 2013). Positivist researchers tend to claim that research must be conducted objectively with emotions and personal experiences considered as a source of bias and contamination (Holland, 2007). In contrast, according to Maxwell (2005) "experiential knowledge is both one of the most important conceptual resources and the one that is most seriously neglected in works on research design" (p.37). However, despite strong opposition in the past, including the researcher's feelings and experiences is now more accepted, particularly in interpretivist research (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn, & Kemmer, 2001; Johnson, 2009). Specifically because "what is researched, and how it is researched", is undoubtedly influenced by the researcher's personal stories and experiences (Guest et al., 2012). Nowadays, there is an expectation that the researcher's beliefs, experiences and skills are made explicit, not only with the intention of uncovering bias, but also as a resource to guide data gathering, interpretation (Braun, Clarke, & Terry, 2014; Guest et al., 2012; Rowling, 1999), and in making sense of the data (Grafanaki, 1996; Seale, 2003). Therefore, as the researcher, I attempted to acknowledge my decisions explicitly as much as possible throughout the research project.

Having studied in mainstream schools in Turkey, received teacher preparation training, and more importantly, worked as a teacher both in mainstream and in segregated settings whilst being visually impaired, has contributed to me having an extensive amount of personal experience on the researched topic. Consequently, I could gather an important amount of information about the quality of delivered training to students with visual impairments from a

first-hand perspective, and there was no doubt that this personal experience assisted me in conceptualising the research problem.

As Johnson (2009) reported, it is not easy to hide our feelings during the data collection and analyses processes. I have to admit that as a researcher with a visual impairment, when I heard that young adults with visual impairments were happy that I was investigating such a topic and trying to increase awareness, I felt overwhelmingly positive because I felt that I was doing something worthwhile. However, when I heard stories regarding how individuals with visual impairments were served and treated, I felt angry and sad. As a human being, could I hide my feelings? I had two options: a) ignore these feelings and pretend they never existed; or b) be explicit about them. According to Mitchell & Irvine (2008), Holland (2007) and Johnson (2009) dealing with these types of feelings and emotions should "involve allowing, acknowledging and integrating them into the research" process. This can provide a greater and more unique understanding of the research topic that enriches it and enhances interpretation and understanding (Clingerman, 2006; Maxwell, 2005; Rager, 2005; Tang, 2007; Watts, 2008). In attempting not to react to the participants' stories it appeared as if I did not care about their emotions, stories and challenges. Therefore, I quickly decided to be open and to acknowledge participants' views and feelings whilst endeavouring not to guide their responses. Before each interview started I stated that I was a researcher with a visual impairment who had studied in Turkish schools. I informed them that I might have had similar experiences to them and that there was no need to hesitate in sharing any sort of information, experience or feelings. After the interviews I reflected on the stories they outlined. When they shared things which were similar to my experiences and were feeling unhappy, I told them that I had had similar experiences. For example, if they talked about bullying after the interview I shared my own experience of being bullied at school. I made a special effort to not comment during the interviews, but it is probable that they could discern my feelings from my tone of voice and other non-verbal communication.

Although being an insider might seem to be a source of bias for some positivist researchers, the richness of the data is proof that this is incorrect. In fact, this approach allowed me to access information which I would otherwise have missed. For instance, in the first study, three of the participants with a visual impairment, Mustafa, Gulsum and Nuray, shared their concerns about misrepresenting Turkey. They feared that talking about these issues would paint Turkey in a negative light and as a result that people would develop negative thoughts about their home country. The quotes below exemplify their views accurately.

> "I said all of these negative things and you are going to share them with foreigners. Actually, this conflicts with my patriotism" (Gulsum).
>
> "I have been complaining about our country and its education system since the morning but I feel bad. I do not want to misrepresent Turkey and feel guilty that I may have done, but unfortunately, that's the situation, that's the reality" (Mustafa).

Although it may have been possible to undertake this research from a more distanced standpoint, I feel that there would have been very little gained, and that this approach might even have reduced the depth of the findings. These quotes illustrate that as I was an insider and had had similar experiences to the participants, this gave them the opportunity to be more open. If another researcher, someone who was not a Turkish citizen even if they had had a visual impairment, had conducted this project, then the participants may not have chosen to be so open and may have tried to disguise some of the challenges and barriers that they had faced. Clearly they wanted to protect their country's repetition and would therefore have exaggerated their positive experiences and satisfaction level with the education system to someone they perceived as an outsider.

Another advantage of being an "insider" was the cathartic benefit. "Cathartic benefit can occur when participants experience comfort, validation, empowerment and a unique opportunity to confide in someone knowledgeable, interested and caring, alongside the opportunity to work through and express their emotions" (Johnson, 2009, p.34). More specifically, on occasions when participants shared information about very unpleasant experiences, during which they clearly felt uncomfortable and upset, despite me offering to stop the interview they always wanted to share more. They experienced relief after talking about these issues and were happy to continue taking part in the study. They frequently stated that it had given them a chance to talk and reflect on important issues, a chance they had not frequently received before (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong-Rice, 2006; Johnson, 2009; Johnson & Macleod-Clarke, 2003; Rowling, 1999). They thanked me for listening and for trying to make a wider audience aware of their experiences. Feeling that their participation may contribute to changing the lives of other people with visual impairments clearly made them want to share more (Rowling, 1999). In addition, participation in the interviews provided them the opportunity for self-awareness and for gaining a clearer understanding of their current life (Johnson, 2009; Orb et al., 2000; Rager, 2005; Simmons, 2007).

Overall, I feel that utilising my experiences was ultimately beneficial both to this research project and to the participants. By grounding the research within a qualitative, constructivist and interpretive perspective it was possible to explore these emotionally-laden experiences and gain an in-depth understanding of the lives of the participants. Furthermore, it was possible to make the experience one of "being-with", and to become immersed in the worlds of those involved (Johnson, 2009). This involvement and being-with allowed a depth of understanding and comprehension that would not have otherwise been possible from a more detached standpoint. It is through this immersion that it was possible for a voice to be given to these young adults with a visual impairment, one that amplified their experiences and the importance and emotional nature of their stories (Johnson, 2009).

Nevertheless, despite the advantage of being an insider during the first data collection, analyses and interpreting processes, being a visually impaired researcher might have placed me as an outsider in the second study where views of the educators were gathered.

In summary, then, instead of claiming that this study is bias free or totally objective, I prefer to be open about my position, perspectives and decisions in order to allow readers to reach their own conclusions and be part of the analysis. I did use my personal experience in conceptualising the research problem, data collection and analyses. I tried to be honest and report details about how I used this experience throughout the project. This openness allows readers to be in my shoes as the researcher and to produce their own interpretations and judgements in a more informed manner. Although some may arrive at the same interpretation as myself, some may form different opinions and this might happen due to differences in our backgrounds or how we see the world (as anticipated by Guest et al., 2012; Lyon & Coyle, 2007).

3.4 Validity, reliability, and reflexivity

In academia, there is often argument about what counts as good research. For many researchers in natural science or who are implementing natural science stances, "good research" is valid, generalisable and replicable research (Guest et al., 2012).

Validity has a variety of definitions in the research literature, and according to Guest et al. (2012) validity is assessing that which one is intending to assess. Similarly, the term reliability is also associated with several different definitions. A simple and clear definition is offered by Black & Champion (1976) as "an ability to measure consistently" (p.232).

Although some researchers advocate that validity, reliability and replicability can be achieved in qualitative research (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999; Hammersley, 2007, 2010; Silberman, 2000), it is easy to understand that these concepts (validity, reliability and replicability) are born of the quantitative tradition and therefore have little or no value in qualitative inquiry (Ezzy, 2002). Many believe that qualitative research is sometimes evaluated using inappropriate traditional criteria that is not suited to its purpose (Ezzy, 2002; Guest et al., 2012; Lyon & Coyle, 2007); "It is as if a music critic who was a specialist in heavy metal evaluated an opera in terms of its pounding, driving rhythm and loud elemental physical sound, expecting fast and furious screaming guitar lines" (Lyon & Coyle, 2007, p.21).

Indeed, there are major issues with applying this mainstream natural science model to the practices of social science (and, more specifically, to interpretivist research) as interpretivist research has a unique style and different aims (Ezzy, 2002). More specifically, since interpretivist research and associated research methods are designed to gather subjective accounts and descriptions based on experience, the data is unique to the individual, which indicates that receiving the same data from other participants is unlikely (Seale, 2003). Therefore, validity, reliability, replicability and similar criteria which are used to judge quality in positivist research should not be used for assessing the quality of research conducted according to an interpretivist model.

Guest et al. (2012) state that the most frequently used term in judging the quality of qualitative research is dependability. This was a term made popular by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Dependability refers to "whether the research process is consistent and carried out with careful attention to the rules and conventions of qualitative methodology" (Ulin, Robinson, & Tolley, 2005, p.26). Similarly, Creswell & Plano-Clark (2011) state that "Validity [in qualitative research] comes from the analysis procedures of the researcher, based on information gleaned while visiting with participants and from external reviewers" (p.211). To do this, researchers must rely on their own judgment and readers need to make a judgment based on the information provided in order to decide whether what the researcher has achieved befits the aims and the findings they are striving for (Guest et al., 2012). Therefore, qualitative researchers need to be open about what they did and why, and include how they did the research in their reports (Attride-Stirling, 2001). With regard to being open about the decisions made and the factors behind the decisions, using quotes from the findings is highly recommended to allow judging at "face validity" which is often considered as essential in

assessing qualitative research. Quotes are “the foundation upon which good qualitative data analysis is based” (Guest et al., 2012, p.89). As suggested, at least one exemplar quote was used in reporting this research project to illustrate each theme with special attention being paid to ensure that the presented quotes were able to exemplify the intended point.

For authors that consider qualitative research as exclusively descriptive, generalisability is not an issue. However, many qualitative researchers oppose this view. Silverman (2000) suggests that qualitative researchers should not be satisfied to limiting the empirical data and that they should produce generalisable research which has a wider resonance. Silverman (2000) speculates that “generalizability” may be the wrong word to describe what we intend to do in qualitative research. Alasuutari (1995) claims that instead of generalising, we must demonstrate that our analysis and findings relate to other people beyond the participants of the research. Meanwhile, Silverman (2000) avers that it is possible to generalise from small cases to populations without following statistical logic. One of Silverman’s (2000) suggestions is to identify a common characteristic of participants and compare that with the rest of the population. In this study that would be the schooling type which students with visual impairments attended and teachers worked at – this might offer a general understanding of other people with visual impairments and of the experiences of educators. Especially, as it was discussed within details in chapter 2, 4, 5 and 6, since the national curriculum is rigid in Turkey; therefore, it is highly likely that there will be many people who have similar experiences with the participants of this research.

Another strategy offered by Silverman (2000) is to compare participants to the wider population. According to Perakyla (1997) we should be able to access a wider generalisability by illustrating similarities and differences across a number of settings, where participants are located. To do this, purposive sampling was used to illustrate views and experiences of participants from different settings. As the sample came into being, a matrix was created and participants were chosen based on characteristics such as visual abilities, gender, educational level, etc. A similar matrix was created for educators to include participants who were working in a range of different settings, e.g. university lecturers, an itinerant teacher, subject teacher schools for the blind, RAMs, ARC, etc. (See 3.6.1 and 3.7.1.“The sample” sections below.)

The final recommendation of Silverman to make generalisations in qualitative research is more radical than his other recommendations. According to this approach, “since the basic

structures of social order are to be found anywhere, it does not matter where we begin our research" (Silverman 2000, p.111). "Look at any case and you will find the same order" (ibid, p.111). For this linguistically-inspired approach, the possibility that something exists is enough to generalise to a wider setting.

Although I believe validity, reliability and replicability are less relevant to this project due to its nature, purpose and the type of research questions that I am attempting to find answers for, I do value the role of generalisability. Although this research hesitates to claim any strong generalisability, by considering Silverman's (2000) statements and the characteristics of Turkey's education system as well as the participants of this study, I believe that its findings might be reflective of the experiences of both educators and people with visual impairments in a wider sphere.

3.5 The research design

In this study a research design that is a variation on the "cross-sectional comparative design" was implemented to capture snapshot data. In the traditional cross-sectional comparative research design, data is gathered once and is used to develop a descriptive picture of the issue (Bryman, 2012; De Vaus, 2013; Robson, 2002, 2011). According to Robson (2011), cross-sectional designs are highly likely to be the most widely-used research design in social inquiry. One reason for this is that cross-sectional designs enable the researcher to obtain results relatively quickly. Furthermore, cross-sectional designs are more cost-effective than comparable experimental or longitudinal designs (Blaikie, 2007; Robson, 2011). More importantly, cross-sectional designs are ideal for descriptive analysis (De Vaus, 2008). The difference between the design of this research project and the traditional cross-sectional design are as follows.

In a traditional cross-sectional comparative research design, data is gathered at one point in time and there is no need to wait for various follow-up stages to analyse the data (Robson, 2011). However, as is reported with more detail in the data collection sections (3.6.2 and 3.7.2), this research project was made up of two studies: Study 1 gathered the views of young adults with a visual impairment, and Study 2 gathered the views of educators. However, although both studies had similar research aims, slightly different data collection tools were used. After Study 1 had been conducted and the data analysed, some of the findings fed into the data collection for Study 2 with the data collection tool being modified as a result. This research project did not collect data from the two groups at the same time,

instead I needed to wait until finishing the data analysis for Study 1 before conducting the Study 2. Therefore each group of participants was asked slightly different questions and although the data allows for easy comparison of all views of both groups, it might not make for an accurate comparison of the various stakeholders in the study. Lastly, as with the traditional cross-sectional comparative design, I do not claim that in this project all factors, e.g. sample size, population, and sample type, are equal within both participants' groups (Bryman, 2012; De Vaus, 2013; Robson, 2011).

In short, although the implemented research design is a variation of the cross-sectional comparative design, and it does have several similarities with the traditional cross-sectional comparative design, I acknowledge its uniqueness (and differences) from the traditional cross-sectional research design.

3.5.1 The research method

Although I was guided by a philosophical position in choosing the style of data collection, I primarily chose the method based on the research subject and research questions. However, I was also pragmatic: one of the research aims was to gather the views of young adults with visual impairments and educators to understand what is happening at grassroots level, so using an inductive approach to seek understanding seemed logical. In gathering this type of data, using a qualitative data collection method was ideal.

The principle of qualitative research is to understand and illustrate the experiences and actions of people as they live, experience and interact through situations (FitzGerald, Seal, & Kerins, 2008). Similarly, qualitative research lends itself to understanding participants' views, to define phenomena in terms of experienced meanings and observed variations, and to develop theory from the ground (Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999). With an emphasis on "lived experiences", qualitative data is appropriate for revealing the meanings people place on the actions, processes, and structures of their life: as well as to "analyse and clarify [these] meanings, perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments, and presuppositions" (Van Manen, 1997, p.214) and for connecting these meanings to their social world (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). Therefore, gathering qualitative data is essential to understand the studied phenomena.

Bryman (2012) states that both qualitative and quantitative methods have unique weaknesses and strengths. Although there is a big debate in academia regarding the

quantitative and qualitative divide and some authors think that both methods cannot be used together due to their different nature, the number of researchers who implement both is increasing (Bryman, 2012; Robson, 2011). According to Bryman (2012) if using both qualitative and quantitative methods enhances the project in a beneficial and worthwhile way, they can and should be combined. A research method that combines qualitative and quantitative data collection methods is termed “mixed method”. In this project, mixed method (predominantly qualitative with some quantitative) measures were utilised to gather the views of thirteen educators of pupils with visual impairment and twelve young adults with a visual impairment. Since the qualitative data might be messy, quantitative data was used to confirm, compare, and contrast it with the qualitative data.

To collect this data, interviewing seemed to be the optimal approach. Interviews are often used in research for social science and there are different versions (Robson, 2011). The differences mostly occur with the structure of the interview (Bryman, 2012). Survey interviews ask a fixed list of questions and participants are required to choose one of the limited given options (De Vaus, 2013; Robson, 2011). Structured interviews ask open-ended questions. Questions should be worded in a certain order and the researcher should stick to this order and wording (Robson, 2011). On the other hand, in unstructured interviews, the researcher usually has an interest in the research topic and allows participants to talk around the subject. This type of interview can be very informal (Bryman, 2012; De Vaus, 2013). Alternatively, semi-structured interviews have worded questions planned in advance but the researcher would decide the order of questions in the interview (Bryman, 2012; De Vaus, 2013; Robson, 2011). Questions can be re-worded during the interview and, more importantly, the researcher can ask additional questions based on how the interview is going (De Vaus, 2001, 2013; Robson, 2011).

Semi-structured interviews are suitable for collecting data in explanatory research and generating theory for a number of reasons. Firstly, they build upon the everyday experience of conversation; generally people are pleased to have the opportunity to talk with an attentive person in a face-to-face situation (Robson, 2011). Face-to-face interviews tend to be popular among researchers as they generate a higher response rate than other methods and there is likely to be less missing data than research conducted via questionnaires (Lyon & Coyle, 2013). A semi-structured interview method also gives the opportunity for the researcher to draw out participants’ past experiences and the consequences on their current life without

imposing any pre-conceptions. This allows for more flexibility and encourages the participants to raise new concepts and issues.

Asking participants to complete questionnaires with open-ended questions may have been a satisfactory alternative method of collecting data, but since the participants come from diverse backgrounds, I could not come up with the most ideal questions. Moreover, since the term ECC or others may be completely new to some participants and clarification was likely therefore to be required, this method was not preferred. Most importantly, since the majority of the participants have a visual impairment and there is very little known about whether they could use assistive technology or Braille to contribute to the data collection process, the interviewing method was chosen over other methods.

Lastly, a focus group discussion was an alternative option for data collection but this was likely to present challenges bringing participants together from various parts of Turkey. Furthermore, since the participants shared very sensitive information and experiences, this method was not selected so as to give participants the ability to talk one-to-one confidentially with the researcher, without feeling a fear of being judged by other participants.

Within the semi-structured interviewing method some Likert scale statements were used. More detail of these is given below in Study 1. Robson (2002) lists several advantages for using Likert scale data collection tools: they are very effective at gathering attitudes towards a phenomenon; they are easy to prepare and rate; and they look interesting to participants. However, if solely used these tools would not have been sufficient to answer the questions for this research project as they do not take into account the variety of voices (e.g. experiences, recommendations) of people gathered. Therefore, the Likert scale questionnaire was used alongside semi-structured interviews.

As mentioned earlier, since this thesis project contains two separate studies and there were differences in the data collection, these processes have been reported separately.

3.5.2 Research questions for Study 1 and Study 2

For clarity I re-present the research questions which drove the designs of Study 1 and Study 2 here:

1. What is the balance of curriculum content experienced by young adults with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
2. What are the direct and indirect consequences of this experienced curriculum balance on lives of individuals with visual impairments as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
3. What is the 'ideal' curriculum balance which should be available for students with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
4. What are the barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum for students with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?

In addition to these research questions, an important theme emerged from the data as my overall study developed, which resulted in me adding the following research question:

5. What other factors influence the independence of individuals with visual impairments (other than the ECC and associated teaching) as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?

3.6 Study 1: the views of twelve young adults with a visual impairment

3.6.1 The sample

In a research project, working with a whole population should be preferred whenever possible rather than working with just a sample (Bryman, 2012; Robson, 2011). However, since it was not practical to include everyone with visual impairment in Turkey, for a study such as this with limited time and funding, using a sample was necessary.

Also, even though random sampling techniques are accepted as being a non-biased way to obtain a good sample (Robson, 2011), a targeted and stratified approach was necessary so as to address the research questions to a relevant group. The sample was small and with a random sample there is the risk that distribution of the characteristics of participants is left to chance. Therefore, a stratified approach was ideal as it helped create a high quality sample by reducing the risk of a different result, at least in terms of the strata characteristics in a

small sample size (Robson, 2011). A stratified sampling technique was used to recruit participants. Strata characteristics were defined by onset of visual impairment, gender, education level, and school type attended. The study gathered evidence from twelve young adults who had a visual impairment whilst at school and who had attended school in Turkey. Data was collected between March and April 2013 in central Turkey. During the collection, the participants were aged between 21–35. They had experienced a range of educational settings and had different visual abilities. More detailed information about the participants can be found in Chapter 4, table 1.

3.6.2 The data collection tools

Based on the research aims and overall questions, and by using components of the ECC, e.g. O&M, independent living skills, self-determination, and assistive technology, whilst considering parts of the ICF on activities and participation, and drawing on the tool that was developed by Hewett, Douglas, & Keil, (2013), a mix-method data collection tool was developed. This tool is a semi-structured interview schedule, which includes qualitative and quantitative components. It contains open-ended questions and Likert scale statements. Please see Appendix 3.

The data collection tools were developed with input from supervisors of the project (who both have PhDs, several publications and research experience), from two TSVIs in Turkey, and from a person with visual impairment pursuing a postgraduate degree who speaks both English and Turkish.

Once the data collection tools were finalised and ethical approval received from the University of Birmingham, the questions were translated into Turkish. Feedback was given by a person bilingual in Turkish and English, before the tools were piloted with a person with visual impairment not taking part in the study. Some adjustments were consequently made to enhance the interview flow.

The semi-structured interviews were designed to encourage participants to offer their own explanations and voice their views about their educational experiences retrospectively, and also about their current life. The data collection tool contained approximately 22 open-ended questions. The first two being general to allow me to get to know the participants a little, break the ice and warm them up for the interview.

The Likert scale questions were used in three different sections of the interview. The first section dealt with self-advocacy skills. Participants were given a short description of some scenarios and then asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a statement. They were asked to choose one of five options for their answers: “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “agree”, “strongly agree” and “I don’t know/no answer”. Once the Likert scale statement had been answered, there were follow-up open-ended questions about it and participants were asked to reflect upon or explain why they had selected their answer. The Likert scale questions were also used at the end of the first section of the interview. After participants had been asked several open-ended questions about their independence, tasks and skills, they were asked similar questions in Likert scale form and were invited to rank their level of abilities. This section helped to summarise their responses. Lastly, nineteen statements were provided about what schools and teachers should be focusing on. Again participants were asked to rank how much they agreed or disagreed with each. A copy of the data collection tool can be found in Appendix 3.

3.6.3 The data collection process

Having lived in central Turkey, I knew people there with visual impairments. After obtaining permission from the University of Birmingham’s Ethical Review Board, I contacted one such individual, informed him of the research and asked whether he knew of people with visual impairments who may be interested in participating in the study. The contact knew some people socially that he thought might be both suitable and interested in participating. Those that fitted the strata characteristics (gender, educational level, attended school type, nature of visual impairment) were contacted. After they had confirmed their interest a consent form and information sheet was delivered in their preferred format. Finally, an interview time was scheduled. Before the interviews, each participant was given a verbal description of the study, information sheet and consent form. Their questions were answered (if they had any) and the interview was conducted in a convenient place for them.

Since all participants had a visual impairment I read each question and statement and participants responded verbally. I took a voice recording of each participant.

Since both Study 1 and Study 2 implemented similar data analysis approaches, in order to avoid replication, the data analysis approach is described in detail under section “3.8 Data analyses” toward end of this chapter for both studies.

3.7 Study 2: the views of thirteen educators of children and young adults with a visual impairment

3.7.1 The sample

Similar to Study 1, in order to represent different views across the field, educators working in a variety of settings were included: two lecturers from the only TSVI preparation programme in Turkey, two TSVIs who were working at RAMs and responsible for assessment, an itinerant TSVI, a subject (English) teacher working at a school for the blind, two classroom teachers at schools for the blind, two deputy heads at schools for the blind, two teachers from a PSEC and an instructor from an ARC. The participants were located in three major cities. For more information about the participants see Chapter 5, table 5.

3.7.2 The data collection tool

Based on the overall research aims, questions, and initial findings of the first study, a semi-structured interview schedule with a Likert scale questionnaire was developed. The data collection tools received input from the supervisors of this PhD research project and also from a TSVI working in Turkey.

Once these tools were finalised and ethical approval was received, the questions were translated into Turkish and again feedback was sought from a person bilingual in Turkish and English. The tools were then piloted and further feedback was sought from someone who holding a PhD in SEN not taking part in the study.

The main difference between the data collection tools used in Study 1 and Study 2 is that in Study 1 both quantitative and qualitative questions were used and the responses were collated together. However, since the interview schedule was too long, in Study 2, the number of open-ended questions was reduced and a Likert scale questionnaire was not used.

3.7.3 The data collection process

After obtaining permission from the University of Birmingham's Ethical Review Board, another application was submitted to MEB to enable the researcher to conduct the study. Permission was received in February 2014 and the researcher contacted potential participants based on his personal contacts and the strata characteristics. Educators were

contacted via phone and given an overview of the study. The educators who agreed to take part in the study were given the information sheet and consent form. Participants in the study also assisted in further recruitment, i.e. a snowball method was used: the researcher described the strata characteristics and participants suggested colleagues who may be interested in participating. Before the interviews, the participants were briefed verbally and asked to give written consent. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in Turkish and a voice recording of this with each participant was taken. All interviews took place at the institutions where the educators worked between February and March 2014.

3.8 Data analysis

In this thesis, two types of data were collected: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data was only obtained from participants in Study 1. This data was accessed using the Likert scale and questioned the participants' beliefs and attitudes about their experiences in education and the role of schools. Responses were coded into numeric form so that the mean and average could be calculated using Excel. The numeric values were: "Strongly disagree"=1, "Disagree"=2, "Agree"=3, and "Strongly Agree"=4. This data was used alongside the findings from the qualitative data (see chapter 4).

As stated earlier, this study gathered a great amount of qualitative data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse this.

3.8.1 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a foundation method which offers essential skills to conduct other methods of qualitative analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, "through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.77). It goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and identifies or examines the "underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies – that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.78). Furthermore, in thematic analysis, identifying themes requires interpretative work, meaning that the analysis produced is beyond description, and is already theorised (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A theme in thematic analysis is defined as "a unit that captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned

response or meaning within the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.88). Ideally it should be encountered in the data set more than once.

In conducting thematic analysis, themes can emerge by implementing either an inductive or deductive approach. An inductive approach requires that themes are strongly linked to the data set. However, identified themes may have little relationship to questions asked of participants. It is essential though those themes are not driven by the researcher's theoretical interest in the subject. Inductive analysis is therefore a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher's analytic preconceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87). In contrast, a deductive thematic analysis would tend to be driven by the researcher's theoretical interest in the subject, and be more explicitly analyst-driven. "This form of thematic analysis tends to provide a less rich description of the data overall, and more a detailed analysis of some aspects of the data" (p.88).

In this study, both inductive and deductive thematic analysis approaches were used. Firstly, I coded widely without limiting myself to questions which were directed to participants. The themes emerged from the data set rather than my theoretical interest and posed questions. I therefore used inductive thematic analysis. At this point, I went back to the data set and coded further and reorganised the themes to answer the research questions, this process is therefore deemed as deductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An explanation of the process is below.

3.8.1.1 Phase 1: becoming familiar with the data

Prior to undertaking any type of qualitative analysis, "raw", spoken, data needs to be transcribed into a textual format (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Lyons & Coyle, 2007). Although this process is time-consuming, (Bird, 2005; Lyons & Coyle, 2007), it helps to make sense of the data. Therefore, having collected the data by interactive means, I transcribed and translated it from Turkish to English. This allowed me to come to the analysis with an increased prior knowledge of the data set and with some initial analytic interests and thoughts (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Robson, 2011).

3.8.1.2 Phase 2: generating initial codes

Phase 2 of the thematic analysis began after reading and familiarising myself with the data and then generating an initial list of ideas about what it contained (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This phase involved producing initial codes from the data, in order to identify interesting features (of semantic or latent content) and “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998, p.63). Coding is the initial step in analysis; it helps to organise the data into meaningful categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Tuckett, 2005). Nevertheless, coded data is different from the actual units of analysis, which are named “themes” (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006); themes are generally broader than codes and usually combine several codes.

According to Braun & Clarke (2006) coding can be either “data-driven” or “theory-driven”. As mentioned above, I used an inductive research paradigm whilst designing the overall PhD project. Therefore, I did not approach the data set with a framework into which to fit the information. I started by reading the transcripts and coding initial ideas. In order not to miss important points, as recommended by Braun & Clarke (2006), I worked systematically through the entire data set, paying full and equal attention to each item, whilst identifying interesting aspects that might form the basis of themes across the data set.

There are multiple ways of coding data extracts, for example by writing notes on the texts being analysed, by using highlighters or coloured pens to mark potential patterns, or by using “Post-it” notes to identify segments of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding can also be done using computer software such as Nvivo, Atlas IT etc. When researchers code using a software package they tag and name selections of text within each data item. Unfortunately, because of my visual impairment, this method of coding was not possible, due to accessibility issues. Therefore, I coded the data using MS Word documents.

First, I read the entire data set and got a feel for the data and the kinds of ideas that were arising from the interview transcripts. I then went through the interview transcripts one by one, creating a new document each time, e.g. “Coding for Participant 1”, and copied and pasted a part of the text which I thought was creating as well as matching a code and placed the text under this code label. I used titles in a stylesheet to code each extract of text that created and matched a code and named it in the data set, thereby creating the first set of analysis data. I created several different folders, each containing different MS Word documents, and collated all extracts and codes into the relevant files. I created a second set of analysis data by looking at the codes arising throughout all the data and created headings that include extracts from all participants – e.g. I created a document named “Sub-categories

1: “Family discouragement” which included the codes and extracts from all participants that came under this heading.

As recommended by Braun & Clarke (2006), I paid particular attention to code as many patterns as possible. Secondly, I coded extracts of data inclusively and where relevant kept a little of the surrounding data. Thirdly, if an extract fitted into more than one theme I coded it and placed it into the relevant files. Therefore, when required, some extracts where coded more than once.

3.8.1.3 Phase 3: searching for themes

Phase 3 began after I had coded the entire data set and collated related extracts into relevant codes. “This phase, which re-focuses the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes, involves sorting the different codes into potential themes, and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.93). Put simply, during this phase I analysed codes and considered how different ones could be combined to form overarching themes. This was the point at which I began to think about “the relationship between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes (e.g., main overarching themes and sub-themes within them)” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.94).This phase ended with a collection of possible themes and sub-themes, and “all extracts of data that have been coded in relation to them” (p.95).

3.8.1.4 Phase 4: reviewing themes

Phase 4 alters the themes created in Phase 3 (Braun, Clarke, & Terry, 2014) and there are two separate levels of reviewing and modifying the themes. Level one involves reviewing at the level of the coded data extracts. I began by reading all the collated extracts for each theme, and then considered if it formed a coherent pattern. When needed, I reworked the themes and created new ones. When I was satisfied that the candidate themes adequately captured the contours of the coded data, I moved on to level two of this phase.

Level two is a similar process to level one, however, it is now for the entire data set. This was the point at which I considered the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set, but also whether the candidate themes accurately represented the meanings evident in the data set as a whole.

The other purpose of level two was to code any additional data within themes that had been missed in earlier coding stages; “the need for recoding from the data set is to be expected as coding is an ongoing organic process” (Braun et al., 2014, p.90). At this level, I recognised that I needed to categorise the candidate themes to answer my research questions. As suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006) I read all the themes and sub-themes along with the codes and extracts collated into those codes, sub-themes and overall themes. However, I recognised that some themes which would answer the research questions were missing. For example, the ideal curriculum balance theme was important, but I did not have enough coding around this theme and a recoding process took place. When I felt that the codes and collated extracts made sense at the initial level, as well as the greater picture of sub-themes and themes, I moved on to the next phase.

3.8.1.5 Phase 5: defining and naming themes

According to Braun & Clarke (206) and Braun, et al., (2014) phase 5 begins when the researcher has a satisfactory thematic map of the data. At this stage, the researcher defines and further refines the themes that will be presented for the analysis. “Defining and refining” means “identifying the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.91).

As recommended, I read and reviewed each theme and sub-theme along with extracted text. The themes were named and an analysis written for each individual theme and sub-theme.

3.8.1.6 Phase 6: producing the report

The aim of writing a thematic analysis is to tell the complicated story of the data in a way that convinces the reader of the merit and validity of the analysis (Braun et al., 2014). Phase 6 begins when the researcher has a set of fully worked-out themes, and involves the final analysis and write-up of the report (p.92).

Writing up a thematic analysis does not happen at the end of the process. Instead, it starts with phase 1 and carries on until the final version of the report. I started to take notes and jot ideas down even before phase 1, during the interviews and transcription process. This writing process was an ongoing one and continued throughout all phases of the analysis. I completed the final version with an effort to tell the complicated story, by organising data into

a meaningful map, in order to voice out the experiences of participants, along with my analysis.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter started with an explanation of the research aims and research questions. I then went onto the philosophical stand point, and theoretical framework of the study. I discussed my views regarding objectivity, validity, reliability, generalisability, reflexivity and positionality. Next, along with the research design, I described each study's samples, research methods and data collection processes. Finally, I described the data analyses approach used in both studies. The next chapter will introduce the participants of Study 1 and then present the findings from the young adults with a visual impairment.

Chapter 4. Study 1: the views of twelve young adults with a visual impairment

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by reminding the reader of the research questions which guided the data collection and analysing process. It progresses to introduce the participants of this study. Later, it presents the data for each research question in turn. It offers a brief overview of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological model of human development which is drawn upon to illustrate the data for the final research question and finally, the chapter ends with a short conclusion section.

As discussed within chapters 1, 2 and 3, this study is concerned with four preliminary research questions which are used to organise the findings:

1. What is the balance of curriculum content experienced by young adults with visual impairments in Turkey?
2. What are the direct and indirect consequences of this experienced curriculum balance on lives of individuals with visual impairments?
3. What is the 'ideal' curriculum balance which should be available for students with visual impairments in Turkey?
4. What are the barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum for students with visual impairments in Turkey?

In addition to these research questions, an important theme emerged from the data as my overall study developed, which resulted in me adding the following research question:

5. What other factors influence the independence of individuals with visual impairments other than the ECC and associated teaching?

As described within section "3.6.1 The sample", this study gathered evidence from twelve young adults in Turkey (aged 21–35 years) who had a visual impairment when at school. It focussed on their educational experiences, independence and overall on their current life situations. For the data collection process, explained in section "3.6.2 Data collection process" and for data analysing, in section "3.8 Data analysis". The participants had

experienced a range of educational settings (e.g. school for the blind, mainstream schools and transfer between two different schooling settings). They had different visual abilities (ranging from being totally blind to having low vision) as summarised in table 1 below.

Table 1 Overview of participants

Name **Gender** **Age**	**Visual Impairment**	**Schools attended**	**Self-define independence**	**Employment**
Barbaros Male 28	Progressive RP very little vision left	Mainstream schools until the 8th grade. 1 year at a school for the blind and then mainstream secondary school	Not independent.	Employee to fill the disability quota
Can Male 34	Progressive RP no useful vision left	Mainstream schools	Became independent in last few years	Employee to fill the disability quota
Derya Female 22	Low vision, person with albinism	Mainstream schools	Trying to be independent	University student, recently hired as a result of the disability quota
Fatma Female 29	Does not know the diagnosis. Progressive, completely blind since age of 6	First 3 years at a school for the blind, and the rest in a mainstream school	Not independent	Teacher, to fill the disability quota
Gulsum Female 27	Progressive, completely blind since age of 12	Mainstream primary school. School for the blind for middle school, then mainstream secondary school	Not independent	Employee to fill the disability quota
Ismail Male 34	Low vision	Mainstream school	Independent	Employee to fill the disability quota ın a private bank.

Mustafa Male 29	Progressive, completely blind since age of 14	Mainstream primary school. Middle school for the blind. Mainstream secondary school.	Pretty much independent	Teacher – the only one who is not hired based on the disability quota
Gökhan Male 30	Completely blind	Primary and middle school for the blind and a mainstream secondary school	Somewhat independent	Teacher, to fill the disability quota
Nuray Female 24	Low vision	Mainstream schools	Somewhat independent	University student
Osman Male 28	Low vision	Mainstream school	Pretty much independent	Employee to fill the disability quota
Ozlem Female 24	Progressive, completely blind since age of 13	Special day class at primary school, school for the blind for middle school and mainstream secondary school	Not independent	Employee to fill the disability quota
Semra Female 29	No visual impairment until the 7th grade when she lost her vision immediately. Completely blind.	Mainstream school for the first 6 years. 7th and 8th grade, school for the blind. A mainstream secondary school	Becoming independent	Teacher, to fill the disability quota

4.2 The experienced balance of curriculum content

This section presents the data related to the first research question – the balance of curriculum content experienced by young adults with visual impairments in Turkey.

The participants in this study are young adults with visual impairments who lived in central Turkey, during the data collection period. They have diverse backgrounds in terms of their

visual abilities, the types of schools they attended, occupation and gender. Nevertheless, there are similarities for all participants. Firstly, all thought that the balance of curriculum emphasised the academic (national) curriculum whilst de-emphasising the ECC; secondly, they felt that this balance was not satisfactory, i.e. either the ECC was not thought about at all or very little of it was taught in an effective manner. Finally, they shared the view that there is a need for change in schools, in order to promote independence.

None of the twelve participants reported a satisfactory preparation for life and many cited the lack of proper training in ECC as being a major contributory factor for this. Although this was strongly and consistently expressed in interviews, different explanations were offered linked to the varied educational settings of the participants. Therefore the analysis first considers each of the settings in turn – schools for the blind and mainstream schools – before looking at curriculum balance across the education system.

4.2.1 The ECC and schools for the blind

In total, seven participants attended a School for the Blind at some time. Although none reported receiving a satisfactory amount of training on ECC whilst there, and participants reported the availability of different amounts of ECC training at the schools for the blind. Fatma and Semra, who attended two different schools for the blind, reported very extreme positions, indicating that they had not received any training on the ECC at all. The only training they had received was on academic skills. For example:

> "No, I didn't receive any training. Nothing was done… In no way – the school had no positive contribution to the development of these skills… My education was only focussed on the academic curriculum". (Fatma)

> "No education was given regarding my visual impairment, preparing us for life, enhancing self-confidence, or anything to help us to overcome the barriers we face." (Semra)

During the interview, Fatma frequently repeated that she did not receive any training on ECC and, therefore, she was very dissatisfied with her education. When asked to grade it she felt she could only give a grade of ten out of 100. Similarly, Semra who attended a school for the blind for one year and stated that she had received no training on the ECC.

Since Fatma only attended a school for the blind during the early years of her education before transferring to a mainstream school, I first thought that she might have forgotten the

training she had received on the ECC. However, Semra, who attended a school for the blind in the last year of her middle school (aged approximately fourteen), supported this account by stating that she had received no ECC training too. Similarly, Ozlem had the same experience having attended a special day classroom for children with visual impairment for five years and then completing her middle school (three years) at the same place, which had been converted into a school for the blind. Ozlem also reported that she had not been offered any training on the ECC during the early years, although at middle school she received some training on ECC components such as assistive technology, although this was not sufficient. Therefore, she too was extremely dissatisfied with her education and would only score it 30 out of 100.

Fatma and Semra claimed not to have received any training on the ECC. However, all the other participants who had attended a school for the blind reported receiving some (if little) training on the ECC. For instance:

> "We were given a cane only during a very few physical education classes, with a maximum of three or four lessons, or it might have been even less, and were asked to walk around … Except Braille, we didn't receive proper training on the ECC." (Gökhan)

As can be seen from this quote, Gökhan referred to both the delivery of O&M and Braille instruction, although he did not find the O&M instruction to be sufficient. Like Gökhan, all participants reported wishing to have learned the skills from the ECC but such training was not offered at the school for the blind, at least not in a manner that was satisfactory. The quotes below capture their dissatisfaction well.

> "We were taught O&M but it was fake. It had no value as education. It used to happen because we wanted it, we used to ask the teachers to take us out and do some practice..." (Gulsum)

> "The school didn't do anything to increase our self-confidence, it actually reduced it. For eight years I studied in the school for the blind, and if we had started to do something from that time we would be very different now. They didn't deliver appropriate training, and neither did they allow us, or encourage us, to go out and do something independently." (Gökhan)

As can be seen, participants reported that schools for the blind offered some training on the ECC but the training was very limited to Braille. What is worth comment though is that some of the students (Gulsum and Mustafa) explicitly asked their educators to be taught these

skills, but educators appeared not to take these requests seriously. Furthermore, Mustafa and Barbaros indicated that they had expected to receive vision-specific education at a school for the blind and that it why they transferred from a mainstream school to a school for the blind, but they did not find it any different to a mainstream school in terms of ECC training (including Braille instruction).

In conclusion, although some training might be delivered in areas of the ECC at some schools for the blind, it is not an appropriate level. Furthermore, it appears that even though students were willing to learn these skills, schools did not deliver the training. Therefore, participants were not satisfied with their education.

4.2.2 The ECC and mainstream schools

All participants in this study spent at least three years of their school life in a mainstream school, due to there being no segregated secondary schools for the blind in Turkey (see section "2.2.3 School options for students with visual impairments in Turkey"). Therefore, after the eighth grade (approximately at the age of fourteen), everyone has to attend a mainstream secondary school. Five of the participants (Can, Derya, Ismail, Nuray, and Osman) never attended a segregated school and finished their education in mainstream schools. Barbaros, Mustafa, and Semra transferred from a segregated school to a mainstream school and Fatma transferred from an elementary school for the blind to a mainstream elementary school at the age of eight (see table 1 above). In short, all of the participants attended a mainstream school during their studies for at least three years and some for eleven.

Regarding the curriculum balance, the picture at mainstream schools was different to that at a school for the blind. Although it was not at a satisfactory level, some participants (e.g. Gulsum, Mustafa and Gökhan) reported receiving some training on ECC components whilst attending a school for the blind. However, none of the participants reported any training received on the ECC whilst at a mainstream school. For example:

> "Definitely there was no training or anything like that (at the mainstream school). So regarding the skills of the ECC in the school, I received zero per cent education." (Derya)

> "…in the secondary school nothing happened. We were not prepared for life at all. I received no different education at all from other sighted students." (Semra)

The participants were explicit about there being no ECC education in mainstream schools. Furthermore, there seemed to be no different outcomes between mainstream primary, middle and secondary schools regarding the ECC and no training on the ECC reported across all settings.

Although there was no direct training on the ECC and there were a lot of complaints around the issues related to the schools and educators, seven of the participants (Derya, Fatma, Ismail, Mustafa, Osman, Ozlem, and Semra) reported that the schools contributed to their development in some areas of the ECC. They especially think that the school helped them to be social and more self-confident, albeit indirectly. For example, Derya with albinism said:

> "The school helped me to be more social. My friends got to know me and started not to be afraid of me." (Derya)

The participants, Derya, Osman, Fatma, Ismail, and Semra, reported that school was helpful in these skills, but did not mention the delivery of any direct instruction. Only Fatma stated that she received training in social skills and self-advocacy along with her classmates. Since she made it clear that she did not receive any additional training, this suggests that the national curriculum is covering these skills for all students regardless of their disability. (When a teacher, like Fatma's, plans the class session and instructions effectively so as to include disabled students, students with visual impairments can learn skills along with their sighted peers.) Another important point that needs to be stressed is Derya's statement. As can be seen above, she indicated that thanks to inclusive placement her peers learned not to be afraid of her and subsequently established friendships. This suggested the existence of peer learning.

As illustrated above, none of the participants received any specific training on the ECC whilst they were attending a mainstream school. Nevertheless, an interesting point is that some of them (Can, Derya, Osman, Ismail, and Nuray) did not consider this situation to be the fault of the education system; instead, they thought it was their fault as they attended a mainstream school and they should have gone to a school for the blind for this training. For example:

> "Yes, school did not have that much influence on my independent travelling but I am not blaming them because I didn't go to a school for the blind so, it wouldn't be appropriate for me to make any criticism." (Can)

This proves that the participants consider mainstream schools and schools for the blind to have different roles. In their minds, schools for the blind are supposed to teach vision-specific skills, whereas mainstream schools are responsible only for teaching academic subjects.

In addition to there being no direct instruction on skills covered in the ECC at mainstream schools, some participants went further and stated that they did not receive appropriate training academically either. As can be seen below, Osman gave only five out of 100 on the education he received because he believes that not only was the ECC not good enough, but also the academic training was not good enough either.

> "I don't think a sufficient education regarding academic topics is given in our country…Teachers do not offer the necessary modifications to include us…The ECC covers many important skills beyond academic skills, which someone with visual impairment must learn as they will really be necessary during all life, and this is not taught, and this shows that school doesn't even deserve to score five." (Osman)

Osman pointed out issues in accessing the academic curriculum at mainstream schools. In addition, he appears to be aware of how important the ECC is in the development of independence in an individual with a visual impairment. Furthermore, it can be interpreted that by giving a very low grade to the education he received, maybe Osman wanted to indicate that the ECC is very important and education without it is useless.

As can be seen in table 2 below, the Likert scale results collected as part of the interview confirm the findings from the qualitative data regarding dissatisfaction with schools. For example, the statement: "I have been well equipped with additional life skills that I will need, such as mobility training and assistive technology skills" was agreed at a group mean of 2.08; whereas the statement "The support I have received in the school has helped me to become as independent as possible" was agreed only at a group mean of 1.75. This falls between "strongly disagree" and "disagree".

Table 2 Independence: personal views

Questions	Group mean	Group range
1. I am able to travel independently around my university/work	3.33	2–4
2. I am able to use computers to be able to access print independently	3.08	1–4
3. I have been well equipped with additional life skills that I will need, such as mobility training and assistive technology skills	2.08	1–4
4. The support I received in school has helped me to become as independent as possible.	1.75	1–3
5. I am confident in travelling independently from my home to local shops and other places local to where I live.	2.92	1–4
6. I am able to adapt to receiving workshop/lesson material in a format which might not necessarily be my preferred one.	3.00	2–4
7. If I had a new lecturer/manager, I would be able to confidently explain my visual impairment and the support that I need in the classroom/work	3.67	2–4
8. I am confident in travelling independently to places which are unfamiliar to me.	2.83	1–4
9. I am confident that I would be able to discuss any adjustments that I may require in order to be able to access a computer in the workplace	3.50	2–4
10. I am confident that I would be able to discuss any adjustments that I may require in order to access written material in the workplace	3.42	2–4

This shows that participants ranked their own independence quite highly. They stated explicitly that they had learned this set of skills, (part of the ECC) from their peers, self-learning and other sources. Although they felt confident in their abilities, they attributed this to factors other than school and associated teaching. Therefore, as table 3 shows, below, all statements regarding whether more ECC training should be delivered to students with visual impairments than the participants received were ranked very highly. This finding (along with their responses to open-ended questions) signals that they experienced a poor curriculum balance and their strong dissatisfaction with the amount of ECC training they received.

Table 3 Role of schools and teachers

Questions	Group mean	Group range
1. More time should be spent on teaching visually-impaired young people to travel independently around their school.	3.83	3–4
2. More time should be spent on teaching visually-impaired young people to travel independently outside of school.	3.92	3–4
3. More time should be spent on teaching social skills to students with visual impairments.	3.75	3–4
4. The schools should give more opportunities to students in order to allow them to be self-confident.	3.92	3–4
5. More time should be spent on teaching independent living skills to students with visual impairments.	3.83	3–4
6. Schools should teach more games and sports to students with visual impairment.	3.33	2–4
7. More time should be spent teaching students with visual impairments how to use vision (if they have any), hearing, touch, and smell for accessing information.	3.50	3–4
8. Students with visual impairments should be introduced to possible jobs and supported according to their interest area.	3.83	3–4
9. Schools should choose a job for each student with visual impairment and prepare them for it.	1.92	1–4

Since this study investigated the experienced curriculum balance, access to academic curriculum was often raised by the participants. Thanks to the inclusion movement, the number of students with SEN in mainstream school settings is increasing rapidly in Turkey (see chapter 2). Nevertheless, the participants shared serious concerns, not only regarding ECC but also with regard to access to the academic curriculum. As illustrated in section "4.3.4 Challenges in accessing the academic curriculum and lower achievement", often participants referred to a lack of accommodations which would have enabled them to access the curriculum at mainstream schools, as well as not being taught some of the subjects that teachers thought unsuitable for students with visual impairments at schools for the blind.

In short, the delivered amount of training on the ECC, and the consequent achieved curriculum balance, does not seem very different between schools for the blind and mainstream schools. Within both settings, almost no ECC skills are perceived as being taught and most of the training appeared to be academically focussed, yet there are serious concerns regarding the academic curriculum as well (see section "4.3.4 Challenges in accessing the academic curriculum and lower achievement"). Overall, the study participants, all having a visual impairment, repeatedly reported their dissatisfaction with curriculum balance. Participants reported several consequences of this curriculum balance on their life and these are presented below.

4.3 Consequences of the experienced balance of curriculum content

This section illustrates the data related to the second research question: what are the direct and indirect consequences of the experienced balance of curriculum content on lives of individuals with a visual impairment?

As illustrated above, ECC is not taught in mainstream schools at all and is taught very little (or not at all) at schools for the blind. Participants reported several negative consequences of not having received appropriate training on ECC components on their everyday life. These consequences are presented below.

4.3.1 Unpleasant schooling experiences

Because of a lack of training on ECC skills (and consequently not developing sufficient skills e.g. friendship/social skills) and a lack of additional support, all participants were unhappy with their schooling experiences. As illustrated in section "4.3.4. Challenges in accessing the academic curriculum and lower achievement", the participants appeared to be given neither the access to learning nor taught the skills to learn independently. In addition, due to teachers' attitudes, they reported being left out of some activities within the classroom. Because of this (and for some other unlisted reasons, as can be seen in the quotes below) none of the participants reported happy schooling.

> "I changed school three times and had lots of problems in each." (Barbaros)

> "School has no role in my life; in no part of my life, in no way, the schools, teachers and something like this has no role at all." (Nuray)

Nuray used four negative words in one sentence to stress her dissatisfaction with her experience. There were a number of quotes throughout the data from all participants stating unpleasant schooling experiences and they each have different explanations, such as poor accommodations and negative attitudes of the teachers. No participant reported happy schooling and Derya, Gulsum, Barbaros, and Nuray especially seemed unhappy talking about their experiences. Despite it having been several years since the end of their school days, they were still feeling sad (to the point that I had to offer to stop the interviews).

4.3.2 Becoming dependent on someone

"Becoming dependent on others" was one of the most frequently mentioned consequences of poor ECC education on participants' lives. All of the participants stated that either they are or were dependent on others as they had not received proper training on ECC. At the beginning of the interviews, participants were asked to broadly define their understanding of "independence" and how it is linked to their visual impairment. All of them stressed that independence meant being able to do things and meet their own needs independently, without the help of others. The following is just one example of many:

> "Independence means meeting my own needs without needing the help of someone and standing on my own feet" (Can).

Some participants (Fatma, Nuray and Ismail) also included a more general concept of "freedom". For those three, independence means being free to do whatever they want whenever they want, as well as being able to do things without the help of others. Fatma illustrated her definition of independence with reference to the freedom a car can give a person; this is not available to her:

> "Independence means freedom. Freedom, means you can get into a car and go wherever and whenever you want." (Fatma)

Driving is an activity which is unavailable to her as a person with no sight. Fatma defined herself as a person who is not independent. Since it is known that her mother has always met her needs, it may be speculated that Fatma mentioned the car unconsciously and thought independence may not be possible for a person with visual impairment. It is important to note that there were some contradictions among her answers. Even though Fatma associated independence with a car, she also reported that it is important to be able to do things without the help of other people. Therefore, maybe early in the interview, she thought independence was not possible for a person with a visual impairment, but because of the questions may have had changed her mind later about the independence of people with a visual impairment.

In short, all the participants think that independence is very much linked to the ability to do any task without the help of others or with as little help as possible. Therefore, as a consequence of not having received an appropriate level of ECC training, "becoming

dependent on others" was one of the most frequently mentioned issues in their lives. For instance"

> "Living without needing someone is very important but I didn't live like this." (Barbaros)

> "Independence, I never felt that feeling, I have never experienced it. I was always dependent on someone in elementary, middle, and high school and it was painful." (Derya)

As can be seen with these quotes, participants often found themselves being dependent on others and reported that this upset them. Also, some participants (particularly totally blind females) reported that although they had succeeded in securing a full-time paid job, they had to be transported by someone. For example:

> "I go to work every day and definitely need someone. My independent travelling is not good at all, it is nil." (Fatma)

> "I never go out of the building. My family brings me to work in the morning, and picks me up in the evening." (Ozlem)

These signalled that, due to a lack of training in ECC components, individuals with visual impairments often have to be dependent on others. As a consequence of not being independent, some participants (Fatma, Gulsum, and Ozlem) said that they are transported by their parents even though they have been working for several years; they expressed their dissatisfaction with this situation. This also proves that being successful academically and securing a job is not enough to lead a satisfactory life.

> "If you have some sight, you can be more independent. I could move around my school independently until the 9th grade (aged 16). But after losing my vision, I became completely dependent on others. As I said when you have some vision, you can do everything." (Ozlem)

> "I was travelling independently using my vision. However, still sometimes, I used to need someone, but I was not as dependent then as I am right now. When I lost my remaining vision, I started to use a sighted guide to go everywhere." (Fatma)

It is crucial to note that the severity of a visual impairment and gender were important factors regarding the level of dependency on others. As exemplified in the quotes above and table 1, female participants seemed more dependent on others than male participants; likewise, participants with total blindness were more dependent on others than those with low vision.

This is discussed in more detail under section “4.6.2.1 Any remaining useful vision” and “4.6.3.7 Gender and culture” in the latter part of this chapter.

4.3.3 Isolation

As exemplified in the quotes below, all participants said that poor training in ECC skills (and consequently not being independent) meant they felt isolated. Furthermore, this isolation was often experienced from very early in their lives. For example;

> “During school it was very tough because I didn’t go out; I just sat in the classroom [because of not having the skills to move around safely].” (Derya)

As a consequence of not being independent, remaining seated for the entire school day was frequently reported. However, isolation is not only applicable for a school day; it is also influenced participant’s current everyday life. Ozlem and Gulsum mentioned that they still do not go out of their workplace during breaks. Similarly, several participants – especially those who are totally blind: Barbaros, Gulsum, Mustafa, Gökhan, Ozlem, Fatma and Semra – report challenges in attending social gatherings and that they feel isolated because of not having independent travelling abilities. For instance:

> “I postponed my life. I didn’t attend some social events, such as meeting friends because I was concerned about how to go back home. I didn’t want to make the people feel that they have to deal with my transportation.” (Gökhan)

> “Wherever I needed to go, I would definitely use a sighted guide…I became social much later, and I attended social activities less frequently. If I had been more independent, it is likely that I would have been a more social person throughout my life and had much better communication with other people”. (Mustafa)

The participants have clearly suffered due to not having independent travelling skills. The lack has forced them to be dependent on other people. Since they cannot always find someone around them, or they hesitate to seek help, it limits their participation in many activities and causes isolation.

4.3.4 Challenges in accessing the academic curriculum and lower achievement

When participants were asked to comment on curriculum balance, they shared their dissatisfaction not only with the ECC but also regarding access to the academic curriculum. They mentioned that due to a lack of training in ECC areas, and therefore, the lack of necessary skills and accommodations, they encountered challenges in participating in classroom activities:

> "Once in my class, our teacher was getting us to read sentences in order. When it was my turn, I told him that I couldn't read it. He skipped me and never asked me to read again [for the rest of the year]. I wish that instead of skipping me he would try to find a way so that I could participate too." (Derya)

Participants stressed that they faced challenges in accessing subjects which contain visual components, especially maths, English and science. For instance:

> "I chose the social area because I could understand it by listening. My maths is very bad because I couldn't see the board. I couldn't do maths in any national examination. I just sat without seeing the board listening to the teacher; and how much maths can you learn by just listening? It was the same for English, I was just listened; how could I learn without seeing the spelling? English was a nightmare because of this. Not being able to learn is a big loss; we start life as if behind 0–1. I am still facing this in many parts of my life. In all tests, I start the game behind [everyone else] because of it". (Derya)

Derya thinks that not learning maths and science has changed her life because these subjects are covered in all examinations and let her start the race behind her peers. Similarly, Ozlem, Gulsum, and Semra reported not being able to learn maths, science, computers and English because of not being able to see the board and the lack of adjustments and support. Moreover, because of a lack of self-study materials and skills, some participants (Can, Barbaros, Derya, Ozlem, Mustafa, Gökhan, and Nuray) reported that they could not be as successful as they had wanted.

Lack of ECC skills did not only influence their academic attainment but also their schooling choices. Because of not having the independent travelling skills and support, Ozlem had to attend the Open University rather than a regular one.

> "I study via the Open University; I am happy because no one has to deal with transporting me." (Ozlem)

The data suggests that a lack of training in ECC skills has influenced the lives of individuals with visual impairments in many different ways. Derya chose a subject that was not her first choice (social science) due to a lack of accommodations and skills. Similarly, Ozlem decided to attend Open University. If Ozlem had had independent travelling skills, it is highly likely that she would have attended a traditional university because she frequently reported feeling 'isolation' (as a consequence of not being independent) and her dissatisfaction with that.

4.3.5 Denying disability and not using the necessary aids

Some of the participants (Barbaros, Derya, and Nuray) appeared not to be confident with their visual impairment. They tried to hide it and not use aids that would contribute to their independence, simply to avoid being identified as disabled. For example:

> "I do not use a cane. Even if I need to use a cane, I don't use it. It might be because I cannot confess my visual impairment to myself. However, despite these difficulties, when travelling, I still travel without a cane." (Barbaros)

> "I don't like reading at a closer distance around people….When I go to the library everyone is reading books, but I just fake reading (pretend)…Regarding technology, I avoid using my cell phone and computer when people are around because I need to look closer and peoples' approaches or their looks bother me." (Derya)

Derya, Barbaros and Nuray reported that they use lots of different tricks to hide their visual impairment. It is anticipated that they would be more confident about their visual impairment if they had received proper training in ECC skills. (Stigma and cultural values in independence are discussed further below and at the end of this chapter under section "4.6.3.7 Gender and culture").

In addition, linked to not accepting their visual impairment and trying to hide their disability, some of the participants (Nuray, Barbaros, Mustafa, and Fatma) reported that either they do not ask for help when they need it, or they ask for help only from familiar people. For example:

> "Whatever happens, even if I have to wait one or one and half hours at the bus stop, I try to read that bus name/number and avoid asking

> others… At the university, several times, I took the wrong bus and was late to my lectures, but asking other people does not match my personality." (Nuray)

> "I try to use only the help of the people whom I know very well, such as friends or family members; I would never ask for help from other people whom I don't know." (Barbaros)

When participants were asked about why they do not ask for help from other people, the most frequently offered answer was that it is because their personality prevented it as it made them feel weak and vulnerable.

4.3.6 Low self-esteem and self-advocacy

As the participants frequently denied their disabilities and didn't use aids, the analyses suggest that they faced difficulties advocating for their needs. For example:

> "I have been working for two years in this institution but no computer has been given to me yet, and I couldn't go and explain that I need one to my managers due to my low self-esteem." (Ozlem).

Although the majority mentioned that they would advocate for themselves to receive modifications and adjustments in their workplace (see table 4 below), only two (Semra and Fatma) asked and made their employers purchase assistive devices to help them perform their jobs. This demonstrates a discrepancy regarding how they perceive their abilities and how they perform in real life. This discrepancy is captured clearly within quantitative and qualitative data.

Table 4 Personal views; self-advocacy

Questions	Group mean	Group range
1. "If I had a new lecturer/manager, I would be able to confidently explain my visual impairment and the support that I need in the classroom or work."	3.42	3–4
2. "I am confident that I would be able to discuss adjustments that I require in order to access written material."	3.42	2–4
3. "I am confident to discuss with a potential employer the skills I have which challenge these views."	3.83	2–4

Agreeing with this, Gulsum's quote illustrates that individuals are very selective in communicating their needs;

> "If I think that a person is approachable I would talk to them. Everything cannot be said to everyone. There is an idiom which I like a lot. It says: it does not make any sense to talk about a prophet with someone who denies God. If someone doesn't want to understand we cannot do anything about it." (Gulsum)

It seems that participants exaggerated their confidence and advocacy skills during the quantitative data collection process; their responses to open-ended questions illustrate that, they did not feel comfortable asking for accommodations needed for independence.

4.3.7 Negative experiences

Because of environmental barriers and a lack of competency in ECC skills, around half of the participants (Osman, Derya, Nuray, Ismail, and Gökhan) reported encountering negative experiences in a range of areas. Some quotes illustrate this below.

> "Once I took the wrong bus and ended up going to a different place other than I needed to go. After that I didn't go out alone for a while." (Derya)

> "I had a very serious traffic accident approximately eight years ago. I stayed in the intensive care for two weeks. After that accident, I lost my self-confidence." (Ismail)

> "I was walking with my brother, who is also visually impaired, in the city centre, and we bumped into an old lady who seemed religious. She started to scream that 'I'm the same age as your mothers, aren't you ashamed?'" She behaved as though we were trying to sexually harass her, even though we both had white canes in our hands. She didn't shut up for a long time." (Gökhan)

These quotes illustrates that individuals with visual impairments have negative experiences which could cause injuries and reduce their self-confidence and therefore independence. Negative experiences with household work and travelling are also frequently reported.

4.3.8 Psychological challenges

Many participants (Barbaros, Semra, Ismail, Ozlem, Derya, Gulsum, Nuray and Fatma) frequently reported that they face psychological and emotional challenges regarding different aspects of their life. For example:

> "…especially the 1st year of secondary school, psychologically, it was very challenging. I had an extremely lonely and isolated elementary and middle school experience. I was far away from people and used to live in my own world." (Barbaros)

Besides Barbaros, Derya also often spoke about psychological challenges which she attributed to her visual impairment. Because of these challenges, she considered dropping out of school. Some quotes from her interview:

> "It is difficult to handle. It was very painful. I was trying to handle the situation by myself and it was a very hard time for me. I was very sad and it was very, very, galling for me…I started to store all of these problems in my internal world. During school it was very tough because I didn't go out; I just sat in the classroom. I couldn't read the board. I was expecting someone to show me their notes so that I could copy them, but it was very painful and I considered leaving the school." (Derya)

The lack of training in ECC – as well as a lack of support services regarding impairment – cause people with visual impairments to face a variety of challenges which bring about psychological and emotional issues, not only in their schooling years but also into their adult lives.

4.3.9 Non-satisfaction with their lives

All participants stated that if they had received training on the skills covered in the ECC, they would be in a better situation. They would be more successful academically and socially, and would be more independent. For instance:

> "If I had received the necessary training I would have more self-confidence, I would have been more successful at a younger age, I would be academically successful and I may even be in a better situation regarding my career, I could have studied for a Masters or PhD." (Can)

> "I wish that I had received training in these skills, at the very least, I would be braver. I would be able do everything independently, I would not have to search for someone to do everything." (Fatma)

> "My educational and social life, as well as everything else would be different. I would be able to travel more easily, do housework more easily, and be more successful in life. I would not postpone things in my social life. I wouldn't be stuck in my own world. I would be more active, I would be able to stay away from situations which stressed and hurt me psychologically." (Semra)

As shown, the participants believe that ECC training is crucial and if they had received such training, their lives would be much better and more joyful. They would accomplish more, avoid isolation and avoid psychological challenges; they would not have to depend on anyone and could be fully independent. In short, a lack of training on the ECC components has negatively influenced their quality of life and hampered their self-actualisation.

4.4 The 'ideal' curriculum balance

This section presents the data related to the third research question, which explores the 'ideal' curriculum balance that should be available to students with visual impairments in Turkey, as perceived by young adults with visual impairments.

When the participants were asked what could be done to promote independence, they reported repeatedly that more ECC training should be delivered to students with visual impairments. As discussed in section 4.2, table 3 shows that all participants believe this. All statements were ranked "agree" and "strongly agree". Furthermore, as can be seen in just one quote below, some participants (Gökhan, Ismail, Fatma Mustafa and Gulsum) went further and indicated that ECC skills should be prioritised over the academic curriculum.

> "Schools, beginning at elementary level, should prepare students with visual impairments for social life and the problems and situations they may face over time, as much as preparing them academically or even more than academic classes." (Gökhan)

Although this study cannot suggest a firm ideal curriculum balance solely based on data, it offers strong clues about the existing balance between the academic curriculum and the ECC. Nevertheless, as illustrated in "4.2.1. The ECC and schools for the blind", "4.2.2 The ECC and mainstream schools" and "4.3.9 Non-satisfaction with their lives" sections, participants think that the existing balance is not adequate, and strongly advocate for more training on ECC, so that they can be prepared as independent individuals. Even though the data cannot suggest how this ideal curriculum balance can be achieved, based on my personal experiences, I have outlined how a better curriculum balance could be established in line with current Turkey's circumstances (please see section "6.4. The 'ideal' curriculum balance" for more details).

In addition, participants were asked about the barriers to and enablers for establishing an appropriate curriculum balance. Their views regarding the barriers to and enablers for offering training on ECC components are presented below.

4.5 The barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum

First, it is important to note that all participants commented on a positive relationship between ECC and independence. They also acknowledged the existence of barriers to and enablers for teaching ECC. Overall, participants reported that “educators”, “the curriculum”, and a lack of “services and resources” were the main barriers to achieving an appropriate curriculum balance.

4.5.1 Educators

4.5.1.1 The low number of specialist educators

As presented in chapter 2, there is only one TSVI teacher preparation programme in the whole country and this only accepts around 30–40 students each year. There is no other institution preparing O&M specialists, rehabilitation teachers or any other professionals responsible for educating people with visual impairment. Some participants (e.g. Ozlem, Mustafa and Gulsum) said that this was the reason that they did not have enough contact with TSVIs. For instance:

> “While I was studying [at the school for the blind] the number of the people who were trained to educate people with visual impairments definitely was not enough. There is a shortage of qualified educators.” (Mustafa)

4.5.1.2 Qualification of the TSVIs

In addition to the low number of qualified TSVIs, the existing TSVIs’ qualifications were frequently questioned. Although teachers serving at the primary schools for the blind were qualified and had graduated from the TSVI preparation programme, participants thought these people were not equipped well with the necessary skills to teach ECC components. Below, two quotes (from several of this nature) are presented.

> “There were some teachers who had received training on how to educate students with visual impairments at university, but I don’t think they were

> well qualified or have the necessary knowledge and skills to teach these skills."(Gökhan)

> "Definitely, they were not satisfying. The number of people who are trained to teach people with disabilities is low and these people are not trained appropriately." (Mustafa)

The two quotes above refer to qualified TSVIs at schools for the blind, yet there were some criticisms raised about other teachers as well and these are discussed below. There are two important issues to be highlighted here: i) there are very few qualified TSVIs; and ii) the participants believe that even if their educators are qualified, they still do not have the necessary skills to teach the ECC. This suggests a potential quality issue with the teacher preparation programme.

4.5.1.3 Qualification of (non-TSVI) teachers (subject and mainstream teachers)

Due to a shortage of specialist TSVIs (and other issues), no specialist teachers were hired at mainstream schools to serve students with a visual impairment. Therefore, students with visual impairments are served by typical classroom teachers who have no specialisation in this subject and this presents an obstacle in receiving training in ECC. For instance:

> "At primary level I was in a regular school, and the teacher was not familiar with special needs and didn't know anything about people like me." (Gulsum)

> "Well, I would give a complete zero; I attended Anadolu secondary school [a type of school that accepts students only according to their test results, as they are supposed to be some of the best mainstream secondary schools in the country]. The school and teachers were very bad. If you stacked all of the teachers on top of each other, they would not make one educator." (Nuray)

These two quotes relate to teachers who work in mainstream schools, and the following quote is linked to educators who work at schools for the blind, yet are not TSVIs.

> "We had computer lessons. Even though we started either in the 5th or 6th grade, we couldn't learn anything because the teacher did not have an educational background and I don't think he knew Jaws that much." (Ozlem)

Due to the low number of specialist teachers, people without qualifications (including supply teachers) are asked to serve students with a visual impairment. Moreover, since these

teachers did not have a point of contact with a TSVI, they could not meet needs of students with visual impairments. Consequently, students with visual impairments face challenges in accessing ECC instruction. This is because: a) it is highly likely that the (non-specialist) educators would not be aware of the ECC components; b) even if they knew them, they could not teach them due to a lack of expertise; and c) they may not be aware of the link between the ECC and the independence of individuals with visual impairments (or even that individuals with visual impairments could be independent).

4.5.1.4 Attitudes of teachers (towards students with a visual impairment)

As was signalled in the section "4.3.1 Unpleasant schooling experiences", there are several complaints associated with educators. Participants frequently stated that educators have negative approaches towards students with visual impairments in their classrooms. Although all participants complained of this, Barbaros shared some of the most extreme views on this matter:

> "In the fourth grade, I attended a new school and the teacher said: 'who is this, what is this, am I going to teach this?' The teacher gave such bad reflections that I was removed from that classroom. I, and my mum, felt so bad that we cried…I had another teacher in the 10th grade, and I cried a lot because of that teacher too. For example, in the middle of the class, [a comment such as] 'what are you doing here? You are blind [a cripple], and what are you doing between sighted people, you don't deserve to study here' [would be made]." (Barbaros)

Barbaros transferred to three different schools during his elementary and middle school years, and like all other participants reported educators' negative attitudes. These experiences prevented him from studying further. Similarly, some educators were not kind to the students and blamed them for their disabilities. In particular, participants with low vision, Ismail, Osman, Nuray and Derya, mentioned that they often encountered such criticisms from the teachers. For instance:

> "Because I couldn't see the board well teachers would demonstrate aggressive behaviours such as yelling and shouting 'why can't you see the board?'" (Ismail)

The participants reported over and over that they were not happy with their teachers, because the teachers were not motivated to teach students with visual impairments and they did not care about them or the ECC. For example"

> "First they should be seeking to do this job. Educators should be aware of this [ECC] training. Teachers should really have a passion and desire to do this job rather than doing the job only to be doing it." (Gulsum)

> "The teachers only, and only, care about their salary. They avoid offering training." (Ismail)

Due to these negative attitudes and a reluctance to teach students with a visual impairment, teachers seemed to become an obstacle in receiving ECC training.

4.5.1.5 Lower expectations

Linked to attitudes of teachers toward students with a visual impairment, the majority of the participants (eight) explicitly reported that teachers had very low expectations of students with visual impairments; therefore, they did not believe that these students could learn anything:

> "When you start something by saying 'I can't do this', you should not expect something out of that – teachers were starting like this. 'I can't teach these people anything.' At least they should start with a 'perhaps', and wonder 'can they do this?' And see if we, as students with a visual impairment, can learn or do anything…" (Gulsum)

> "They didn't even believe that we could be educated, so how would they support our independence? They had much lower expectations of us." (Fatma)

The participants said that they faced many educators who had no, or very few, expectations of them. In particular, as exemplified in the quotes above, educators did not think individuals with visual impairments could be independent. Participants thought they did not try their best to offer proper training in the ECC. This meant that individuals with visual impairments could not acquire the necessary skills. Also, the teachers would behave as if these students were not present in the classrooms when they could have instead been introducing components of the ECC or including them in activities. For example:

> "Once in my class, our teacher was getting us to read sentences in order. When it was my turn, I told him that I cannot read it. He skipped me and never asked me to read again [for the rest of the year]. I wish that instead of skipping me that he had tried to find a way so that I could participate too." (Derya)

Similar to Derya's experiences, some participants (Ismail, Nuray, and Barbaros) mentioned that their teachers skipped them during in-class activities rather than trying to find a way to include them and they felt left out as a result. I think these incidents could be better seen as excellent opportunities to introduce areas of the ECC into the academic curriculum. In Derya's situation, the teacher could have: a) used assistive technology; b) allowed Braille practice by offering a Braille copy (if the student is a Braille reader), c) taught using audio materials. However, it seems that educators did not and/or could not do any of these.

4.5.1.6 Exceptional teachers

Despite all participants intensively complaining about their educators and seeing them as barriers to training in the ECC, in several parts of the interviews, participants (Mustafa, Gökhan, and Gulsum) reported that they had had some teachers who had made a special effort to deliver some training on the ECC and promoted independence. For instance:

> "We got into the habit of doing our own cleaning: washing our clothes and organising our wardrobes. But I think this was due to our teacher's personal effort rather than it being a school-wide practise." (Gökhan)

> "With the exception of the effort of that teacher, I didn't see any other serious effort or attempt. The school did not have a such mission." (Mustafa).

Overall – and throughout the interviews – the participants made many complaints regarding their educators. However, they did not hesitate to be thankful and share their positive experiences regarding those who had made a special effort on the ECC and acted as enablers. These educators were unfortunately reported to be very rare and the exception.

4.5.2 The national curriculum and the ECC

After educators, the curriculum came second in the most frequently reported barriers to accessing an appropriate curriculum balance. Gulsum, Derya, Semra and Gökhan, frequently criticised the national curriculum for not recognising the importance of ECC. This meant that their teachers could not teach the skills needed to be independent even if they had wanted to do so:

> "Even if a teacher wants to give this [ECC] training, can he give it? There is no such class in the curriculum." (Gulsum)

> "We did not receive such training but what can we say to teachers? They are given a particular curriculum and they are asked to teach it." (Derya)

On the other hand, although the participants argued that there was no time specifically allocated to teach the ECC, Gulsum points out that at schools for the blind there might be times when ECC skills could be taught.

> "We used to have an optional nine-hour class in a week focussing on handcrafts, it was ridiculous. Instead of this, we could have been offered training in how to address our daily life and increase our independence. It would have been much more appropriate for us." (Gulsum)

Gulsum suggests that although there not allocated lessons to teach ECC skills (such as O&M, independent living skills etc.) there is time which might be considered specifically tailored to art and craft for the blind – these classes do not exist at mainstream schools. This time could be used to teach more meaningful skills that would contribute to the independence and quality of life of students with a visual impairment.

4.5.3 A lack of vision services

All participants who lost their vision gradually (Barbaros, Can, Mustafa, Fatma, Nuray, Semra and Gulsum) reported that they were not recognised and referred to services that might have been able to offer support to students with visual impairments in both academic and ECC skills. Derya, who has low vision and attended a mainstream school all of her life, expressed her feelings as follows:

> "For me, the biggest obstacle to being independent was that first I attended a normal school and wasn't recognised. The teacher never came and asked me if I have this [visual impairment], and if so, I could do something like this [suggestions and guidance] to deal with my visual impairment. I didn't receive that kind of guidance, support, or help from anyone." (Derya)

Linked to vision services, it also appears that although all participants would have benefitted from assistive technology devices, none of them received an assessment. One participant with low vision (Ismail) saw my video magnifier and was very interested in it and asked to try it. He liked it very much. Until that moment, he had never had a chance to investigate such a device. This point can be interpreted as evidence that he was not referred to necessary services when he was young. Furthermore, he has yet to be referred. In short, none of the participants received any vision support services whilst attending (especially a mainstream)

school. A lack of proper support services seemed to be a significant barrier to being able to receive the proper training on ECC components, and a lack of such training creates an inappropriate curriculum balance.

4.5.4 Materials and teaching facilities

Another barrier to receiving appropriate ECC training reported by participants is a lack of instructional materials and teaching facilities. For instance:

> "We used to have a computer lesson but were sitting two students on a PC due to shortage of PCs; therefore, I couldn't learn anything." (Ozlem)

On top of a shortage of instructional material, lack of facilities such as a kitchen was reported as a barrier in receiving ECC training. Furthermore, not only did participants complain about a lack of teaching facilities and materials with regard to the ECC, but they also expressed their concerns about a lack of materials in academic subjects (e.g. maths, science etc.) In short, a lack of appropriate materials and teaching facilities was a barrier to receiving ECC training and accessing an appropriate curriculum balance.

In summary, participants reported several barriers to them receiving training on the ECC with most barriers being related to the shortage of TSVIs, educators' qualifications and attitudes toward the ECC and teaching students with visual impairments. Additionally, a lack of vision/educational support services, the curriculum, and physical conditions were all perceived as barriers to achieving an appropriate curriculum balance. Nevertheless, educators, who made a special effort to teach the ECC, were reported to be enablers for an appropriate curriculum balance. Since there was little ECC training available, participants more often identified barriers than enablers. The second study will gather the views of educators and clarify some of these issues. The participants also commented on some other issues which they thought were influencing their independence beyond ECC and associated teaching. This led to the development of the fifth research question as discussed in the methodology chapter. The factors which influence the independence of individuals with visual impairments (which are beyond the ECC and associating teaching) are presented below.

4.6 The additional factors influencing independence (beyond ECC and associated teaching)

As described in chapter 3, which I hadn't expected, an important theme emerged from the data (and as my overall study developed), which added an additional research question: what additional factors (beyond ECC and associated teaching) influence the independence of individuals with a visual impairment? I draw on Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological model of human development to present these factors. First I will introduce a brief overview of the model and then, illustrate these factors based on the model.

4.6.1 The Bio-ecological model of human development

Bronfenbrenner coined the original term, "Ecological model of human development" in 1979 to explain human development. Later he improved the model and re-named it the "Bio-ecological model of human development" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Bronfenbrenner conceptualises the child at the centre of a nested system of "environments" which he illustrates as a series of concentric circles (Anderson et al., 2014). Rogoff (2003, p.46) states that "these environments are described as being separate systems and related in a hierarchical fashion as the 'larger' contexts affect the 'smaller' ones, which in turn affect the developing person". The focus of the theory is considered to be upon the "progressive, mutual accommodation" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005, p.107) throughout a given timeframe between the developing individual and the changing characteristics of the immediate contexts in which s/he interacts. As noted by Bronfenbrenner (2005), this process is affected by "the relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded" (.p.107). The layers of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological model can be summarised as follows:

The microsystem layer is the smallest circle and contains the most immediate environment of the child "physically, socially and psychologically" (Swick & Williams 2006, p.371). This layer is where the child lives and moves – this "core entity stands as the child's venue for initially learning about the world" (Swick & Williams 2006, p.371). It contains family members, teachers, peers etc.

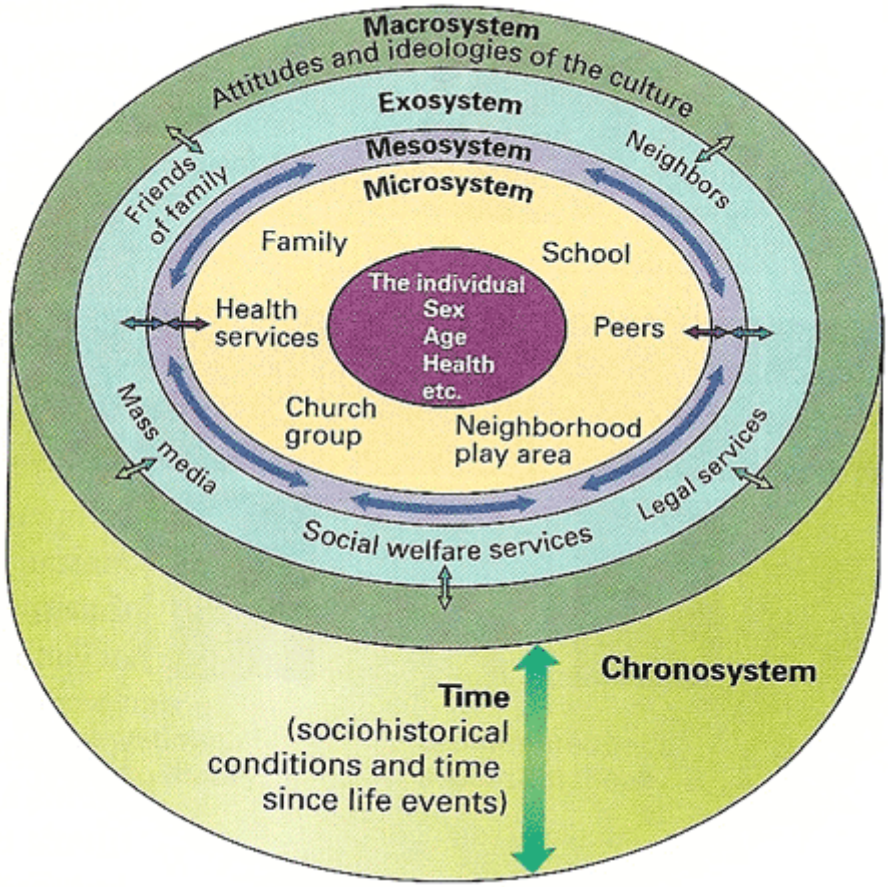
The mesosystem relates to the interactions between two or more microsystems and the people in these microsystems with each other, such as family and teacher interactions or interactions amongst neighbours (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Swick & Williams 2006).

The exosystem has a wider context as it relates to layers which the child has a direct contact with, as well as ones s/he would never have direct contact with but which influence the child's life (e.g. extended family, mass media, workplaces, family friends, community health systems, legal services, social welfare services) (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Swick & Williams 2006). Although the child may not have direct contact with these systems they still affect the child's development – as do all systems.

Macrosystems contain the larger systems of cultural beliefs, societal attitudes, ideologies, values, laws, and customs of a particular culture or subculture (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Swick & Williams 2006).

Chrono-system is the last layer added to the Bio-ecological model of human development; it is linked to time and historical events (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009, p.201). According to Bronfenbrenner & Morris (1998, p.1020) "the life course of individuals is embedded in and shaped by the historical times and events they experience over their life-time". For example, although many families would be quite careful about the food they eat, "during the Great Depression of the 1930s many families simply were ecstatic to have food and did not have the luxury to worry about the nutritional value of the food they had on the table" (Swick & Williams, 2006, p.372). This highlights the influence of environmental events and their direct and indirect consequences over the lifetime of a person (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Figure 1. Illustration of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological model



(Source: Santrock, 2014, p.33)

The Bio-ecological model emphasises that each layer interacts with other layers, producing a complex setting in which a child grows up. Moreover, the child takes an active role in what goes on around them. Placed at the centre of the model, the child interacts directly or indirectly with people in different systems and the effects of the interactions go in both directions; the child and the people around the child influence each another. Consequently, the different layers continuously interact and change. This is a result of varying circumstances, for example life events, crucial milestones and the child's development. As the context changes so does the entire system which is always evolving.

According to Bronfenbrenner (2005) in the Bio-Ecological Model, there are several different environmental layers around individuals and interactions between these different layers and the individual play a crucial role in the individual's development. On the other hand, according to the ICF framework, there are two important factors influencing the participation of individuals with a disability in everyday life: they are classified as a) individually-based

barriers, and b) environmentally-based barriers (see 2.1.4 for more details). In this section, by using the Bio-Ecological Model and the ICF framework principles, individual explanations of disability will be discussed first. I will then look at environmental (socially) based explanations of disability whilst using the layers offered by Bronfenbrenner.

4.6.2 Individually-based factors influencing independence

4.6.2.1 Any remaining useful vision

As I established in section "4.3.2 becoming dependent on someone" and below, most participants with low vision are more independent than participants who are totally blind. Furthermore, during the interviews, participants with low vision stressed that because of their existing functional vision they could do some tasks more easily than blind participants. For instance:

> "I can travel independently by using my vision." (Nuray)

> "I think I would be able to learn most of them [independent living skills] very quickly without any problem thanks to my vision." (Osman)

Similarly, Ozlem and Fatma, who are now totally blind and two of the least independent participants, stated that when they had had some useful vision they were more independent (see section "4.3.2 Becoming dependent on someone"). In short, participants thought that any useful vision was a positive factor contributing to independence and having no useful vision, hindered their independence.

4.6.2.2 Internal motivation and self-esteem

It appeared that internal motivation is another crucial factor influencing independence of people with a visual impairment. For example:

> "Firstly, internally, I had to understand that being independent is very important and accept that I have to improve my abilities." (Gökhan)

> "… I really learned everything myself because of my self-determination and resolution." (Derya)

A deliberately-delivered instruction on ECC was expected to enhance the independence of individuals with visual impairments (Hatlen, 1996; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). However, regardless of instruction, the personal motivation, which each individual possesses to a

different extent, is an important factor in acquiring independence. Similarly, self-esteem seemed to be another important factor influencing independence and participation in life. Participants often did not ask for adjustments which may have helped to increase their independence because of low self-esteem (see section "4.3.6 Low self-esteem and self-advocacy"). Overall, based on the participants' narratives, it seemed to me that people with higher self-esteem and levels of personal motivation are better able to be independent than those with lower esteem and motivation.

4.6.2.3 Courage

Five of the participants (Nuray, Gulsum, Mustafa, Gokhan and Semra) reported that being courageous played an important part in them being independent. Two participants, Barbaros and Ozlem, stated that they are not independent because they are not brave enough. For instance:

> "The first step to independence is being brave. I appreciate my courage and achieve most things in my life because of it." (Semra)

> "Sometimes, I just want to take my cane and go out but I can't do it. I'm not brave enough to do it". (Barbaros)

4.6.2.4 "Zero option"

Feeling and knowing that "one has to do what one has to do" is another factor reported as making a significant contribution to independence. Five participants reported that they felt they had no other option (a "zero option") other than to be independent in order to perform day-to-day tasks. This way of thinking motivated them to be independent and each step towards independence made them even more so. For instance:

> "…the view that 'one has to do what one has to do' destroys everything, leaving me with no choice but to ignore society's attitudes. I had to use technology to do whatever I needed to do. I had no choice [it was a zero option]." (Derya)

> "I have to do it. If I don't use it, I cannot read and if I can't read, I can't attend school." (Nuray)

Even though some participants mentioned that they avoided doing things because of others' approaches (as illustrated under section "4.3.5 Denying disability and not using the

necessary aids"), some participants did not care about others' attitudes, as they felt that they had to do those tasks so had no option. This feeling of "having to" increased their independence.

4.6.2.5 Negative experiences

Eight participants reported that negative experiences reduced their self-confidence and motivation for doing similar jobs independently in the future. For example:

> "I had a very serious traffic accident approximately eight years ago. I stayed in intensive care for two weeks. After that accident, I lost my self-confidence." (Ismail)

Although several participants mentioned that negative experiences had reduced their self-confidence, two participants reported that negative experiences might have had positive consequences for them. Nuray and Derya said that when they have negative experiences they might retreat for a short time, but later on those experiences motivate them to fight harder and be more independent. For instance:

> "I cried and that was the last time I cried. At that time I said, 'I will go, and everyone will see how I will go'. When I face something negative it encourages me more to fight more and to do more rather than put me off; it motivates me." (Nuray)

Overall, even though two participants reported that they were encouraged after negative experiences, the remainder reported that their self-confidence in independence would be reduced due to negative experiences with everyday tasks.

4.6.2.6 Fear

According to nine participants, "fear" is a contributing factor to inhibiting independence. "Fear of making mistakes", "hurting themselves" as a consequence of mistakes and "fear of other people" were the main sources of discouragement to being independent. For example:

> "Fear of making mistakes, and also, fear of getting hurt is putting me off." (Gulsum)

Moreover, a few participants (three) reported that they were afraid of other people and this prevented them from being independent. The quote below captures the matter accurately.

> "I have trust issues. I don't know what kind of people I will encounter. How can I ask for help on the street? If I ask, how will they approach me? What would they say? Would they take me to the wrong place and do something? I don't trust people and since I cannot trust people I have that kind of a problem." (Fatma)

Although Fatma was asked if she had had any unpleasant experiences with people on the street, she did not remember anything specific. However, what was more revealing was that all the participants who reported that they were afraid of hurting themselves and afraid of other people, were female. As reported in section "4.3.2 Becoming dependent on someone", since female participants are less confident in performing skills required for independence, it can be speculated that they are afraid of hurting themselves because of not having the necessary skills. This may also be related to over-protection by parents as children.

4.6.2.7 The joy of success

The most frequently reported positive factor in increasing motivation in being independent was the "joy of success". All participants mentioned the joy of success as a crucial source in encouraging them to become independent. For example:

> "Success, when I try to do something independently, and achieve that, it motivates me for the next task." (Can)

> "Doing something which I need to do without any help increases my motivation, my self-confidence and encourages me to work harder for the next task." (Barbaros)

4.6.2.8 Self-learning

Lastly, self-learning was reported to be an important enabler for participants' independence. Due to a lack of training in ECC skills at school, nine participants resorted to self-teaching and attributed their skills to their own self-learning rather than any other source. For example:

> "Firstly, internally, I understood that being independent is very important and accepted that I have to improve my abilities and teach myself to use assistive technology and travel independently." (Gökhan)

> "I have so much curiosity and want to learn everything. I really learned everything myself because of my self-determination and resolution." (Derya)

It appears that those who could not accept being dependent took a giant step to independence by themselves. When they could not find somewhere to learn the skills required for independence they taught themselves. It follows then, that those who could not find any source for learning and did not take the initiative and self-learn would be less independent.

So far, several individually-based factors influencing the independence of people with visual impairments have been presented. It is crucial to stress that instruction in ECC areas would contribute to development of these factors (see Agran et al., 2007; Allman & Lewis, 2014; Hatlen 2000; Sapp & Hatlen 2010), yet each individual possesses these factors to a different level due to their nature. In the next section, socially-based barriers and enablers in becoming independent are presented.

4.6.3 Environmentally-based factors influencing independence

As presented above, Bronfenbrenner (2005) placed the individual in the middle of concentric circles, which represent the environment and the individual and noted that all layers of the environment influence each other. I will first look at the role of microsystems, the smallest circle in which the child lives and moves, in developing and promoting independence of individuals with a visual impairment.

4.6.3.1 Family

Throughout the interviews, all participants commented on the role their families took in their independence. The participants thought that family was a very important element in developing their independence. The influence of the family can be broken down into two broad categories: “family as an enabler” and “family as a barrier”.

4.6.3.1.1 Family as a barrier

Prevention or discouragement from doing some tasks, providing negative feedback on completed tasks, and over-protection by family members seemed to have a negative impact on the independence of individuals with a visual impairment. Many participants reported how their families prevented them from doing certain tasks due to their impairments. For example:

> “My family didn’t allow me to ride a bike and I couldn’t take part in many different games because of my visual impairment...Once, I wanted to help my mum with the cooking but she didn’t allow it.” (Can)

This form of family discouragement was reported by several of the participants as a barrier to being independent. With the exception of Nuray, all participants reported that their families did not want them to undertake certain activities for different reasons. In addition, one participant (Derya) reported that some family members were not satisfied with her housework and discouraged her from doing it by commenting negatively. For instance:

> "My sister once said 'What kind of cleaning is this? Let me do it so you can see how cleaning should be done' …this destroyed my self-confidence and made me cry." (Derya)

Moreover, nine of the twelve participants reported that their families were over-protective and would complete all tasks on their behalf. For instance:

> "They never allowed me, or supported me, to develop independent travelling. They were so emotional and tried to do everything for me." (Mustafa)

> "Even if I think I can do something, since they [family members] do everything for me or with me, I felt as if I don't need to do it." (Gökhan)

Ironically, as a natural consequence of being limited at home, all participants who described themselves as independent mentioned that they had developed their independence after leaving their parents' house. For example:

> "I couldn't gain independence until I went alone to study in another city. This was the biggest factor in gaining my independence." (Mustafa)

> "People with visual impairments who are far away from their families are more independent." (Ozlem)

Simply put, these participants argued that being away from their families was important in being able to develop independence skills. Not only did the participants who classified themselves as independent (e.g. Semra, Gökhan, Mustafa) state that being far away from the family had an impact on their independence but also so did the participants who thought of themselves as not independent (e.g. Ozlem, Fatma, Gulsum). In short, parents who discouraged their children from attempting tasks, resorting to negative comments and over-protection, appear to hinder the independence of their children.

4.6.3.1.2 Family as an enabler

Even though lots of negative points were raised regarding families, there were some instances in which families were reported to have contributed and played an important role in promoting the independence of people with visual impairment. For example, encouragement and constructive feedback were effective enablers. Nevertheless, overall, only five of the participants reported encouragement of their family in doing tasks and just two, Nuray and Derya (Derya's mother and father supported her but other family members did not), mentioned that their parents supported them in any way they could. For example:

> "My mum used to leave the house and go, and say 'take care of the house and look after your brother'. My father says, [Derya] 'you can do everything'. Since my family trusted, supported and never hindered me, I felt more comfortable and gained self-confidence." (Derya)

> "I did as much as I could see and my mum never said anything like 'you didn't do it well'. She always said 'very good/well done', and these kinds of things motivated me and increased my self-confidence." (Fatma)

Being given the chance to do a task, and then to receive constructive feedback upon completion is a very important factor in promoting independence. Moreover, family encouragement was reported to be an essential factor in promoting independence as well. For example:

> "First of all my family. They are incredible people. They always encourage me in everything." (Nuray)

Nuray seems to be the only participant who used assistive technology devices from early years. When asked, she reported that her family had researched the tools, purchased them and encouraged her to use them. Therefore, to be given the opportunity, encouragement and constructive feedback of family seems essential for the independence of people with a visual impairment.

4.6.3.2 School environment

As another crucial microsystem in the Bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner 2005), schools played an important role in influencing the independence of the participants. With the exception of few teachers (see section 4.5.1.6 Exceptional teachers"), all participants generally regarded schools and teachers as negative or at best neutral, which indicates that schools did not make a positive contribution to developing independence. For example,

Nuray reported that one of her teachers had complained about a person who asked the bus driver about the route (number) of the bus. Consequently, she stopped asking for help from the bus drivers.

> "One of my teachers was saying 'Still, we have many people who don't know how to read' and things like that. I wanted to tell him, 'Perhaps she cannot see that well', but I couldn't say it. After that day, I never asked any of the bus drivers about the route of the bus." (Nuray)

> "The role of the school? Actually in school, there wasn't anything, even my self-confidence was destroyed. They did not allow us to move nor use our canes." (Semra)

Not being able to use canes and move around the classroom, or school premises, are all important barriers to becoming independent. Clearly, participants did not think that their educators and school environment encouraged them to be independent. As a consequence, their confidence decreased. In particular, both quotes further justify why participants did not feel comfortable about their visual impairment and did not want to disclose their impairment to people around them or want to ask for help when needed.

4.6.3.3 The influence of role models and friends

After the family, an important layer of the social environment is friends. Friends and peers make up a separate micro-system in the Bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner 2005). As reported, because both training in schools on the skills covered in the ECC and support from families and teachers was limited, the participants' friends' influence is crucial in developing independence. For example, individuals with visual impairments reported sharing knowledge and encouraging each other to be independent:

> "A friend of mine was using a PC for his studies and he encouraged me to use one also. I purchased it and then he taught me on the phone." (Gökhan)

By sharing information with each other, young adults with visual impairments were guiding and motivating each other to be independent. Sometimes, participants were even encouraged by simply being around independent people with a visual impairment. For example:

> "My friends are the main supporters for me and they are the most important example for me. When I see someone who can achieve

> something, naturally, it encourages me and I want to do it too. My friends are the ones who support me, saying 'you can do it'. When we try to do something together, I see that I can do it too and it motivates and encourages me." (Gulsum)

As illustrated, the participants thought their friends' influence made a positive contribution to their independence.

4.6.3.4 Physical barriers and the lack of accommodations

Nine of the participants (Can, Barbaros, Fatma, Gökhan, Mustafa, Nuray, Ozlem, Osman, and Derya) reported that physical barriers are significant factors in decreasing their self-confidence to go out independently and be part of society. The following quote from Ozlem summarises the situation concisely. She stresses that in order to include a person with visual impairment in society, not only ECC training should be delivered but also that the physical environment must also be accessible.

> "Think about crossing to the other side of the road as a visually-impaired person, even if that person were well trained, the traffic lights do not have an auditory signal. If you take the bus, there are no auditory systems to tell you the name of the buses or stops." (Ozlem)

In 2005, the Turkish Disability Act was approved which mandates that all public areas and services ought to be accessible for people with disabilities. The participants often referred to this legislation and stated that, in spite of it, there are still physical environments that are not accessible for people with a visual impairment. As a result, on top of a lack of training in ECC, a lack of appropriate physical environments is further reducing the independence of people with visual impairments and preventing their participation in social life.

On the other hand, eleven of the twelve participants were employed at the time of data collection. However, none of the participants reported having access to satisfactory assistive technology devices which would make their life easier. School did not provide such tools and there was no other organisation to provide them to people with visual impairments afterwards. Therefore, participants did not have access to assistive technology devices in the workplace to increase their independence in employment and everyday life. For example:

> "At work, I do not have any assistive technology devices to read, so I ask people/friends to read to me." (Gulsum).

> "I have the skills to use one, but it is difficult to access a Braille embosser; it is likely that there are some devices which would help me to do such jobs, but they are expensive. So, there is a way to do it, but we don't have access to it." (Mustafa)

Some participants mentioned the lack of assistive technology tools in their work places. Even if they had the necessary skills to be independent, due to a shortage of assistive technology devices, they could not be independent. Participants made similar comments about their school life. In other words, they stated that they did not have access to such devices either at school or during their working life. It is logical, therefore, to expect people to face greater challenges in becoming independent because of these physical barriers and lack of assistive technology devices.

4.6.3.5 Approaches of people on the street

The exosystems layer covers a wider context, in that it relates to the broader community in which a person lives e.g. mass media, community, legal and health services, social welfare services (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). As an important layer of the social environment, all participants reported that society was an influential on them becoming independent. A frequently cited barrier to independence was the "inappropriate questions and reactions of society". All participants reported that when they go out, questions, looks and reactions bother them and discourage them from doing a variety of tasks. For example:

> "Actually, the main disabling thing is the environment. You can take your cane and go out but what you will face is important. Therefore, I'm not brave enough consequently, I'm not independent…It is not my disability that disables me, but others' views (approaches) disable me in my educational and social life." (Fatma)

> "I read regular print at a close distance and many people come and ask why I read that closely, suggesting that I would hurt my eyes. I don't want to hear, 'how close you hold the books, is going to hurt your eyes' any longer….When I go to the library everyone is reading books, but I just fake it as if I am reading (pretending)…Regarding technology, I try to avoid using my cell phone and computer when people are around because I need to look more closely and people's approaches or their looks bother me." (Derya)

> "I used to make the print size larger by photocopying it if the print was too small and once had a very bad experience. I was always asking the guy at the dorm's bookstore to enlarge the size of print when I was getting my photocopies. One day, I asked him to enhance my copies, and he said something like, 'why are you making me do this? Can't you read regular

> print?', or something like that. I felt so bad, I told him, I can't read and what I can do about it? He was only a few years older than me and it destroyed my self confident and I felt very sad and embarrassed. Afterwards, I never asked to make my copies larger again". (Derya)

Lastly, despite several negative experiences with other people, some participants (Derya, Gulsum, Fatma, and Semra) mentioned that they are more motivated and encouraged to be independent when they hear other people admiring them. For instance:

> "When I was admitted to university, people were surprised and said look she is visually impaired but she achieved it. These nice reflections encourage me more and more to be successful in all areas of my life." (Semra)

As a result, not only did the negative reflections of society affect the participants, but positive reflections encouraged them to be more successful and independent and to participate in everyday life.

4.6.3.6 Decision makers

Participants frequently criticised the general approach of society regarding people with visual impairments and their abilities. This includes decision makers: since people do not know about the needs of individuals with a visual impairment, they have low expectations of them. This attitude can manifest itself as a barrier in the everyday lives of individuals with a visual impairment. For instance, Can, who was trained to be a teacher, reported that he was asked to quit his teaching job when his manager recognised his visual impairment, although he had no problem performing his role. He was disappointed in this approach and lost his self-confidence. Osman and Mustafa accurately captured the attitudes of officials who make decisions regarding people with a visual impairment:

> "The image of the visually impaired in their eyes is as one who cannot do anything, is completely useless; they should be given charity, or the State should help them so that they can live their life." (Osman)

> "They think people with disabilities are not capable, should be looked after and should be given some money." (Mustafa)

These low expectations of society members, including decision makers, are interpreted as another crucial challenge faced by people with visual impairments in their attempts to lead independent lives.

4.6.3.7 Gender and culture

According to Bronfenbrenner, the outer layer of the environment is called the macrosystem, and it contains the attitudes, values, and customs of a culture or subculture (2005). In this section, the role of culture on the independence of individuals with visual impairments is presented.

Gender seems to be a crucial factor in influencing the independence level of participants. As illustrated below, it is reported by Barbaros, Can, Mustafa, and Gökhan, that in Turkish culture boys are excluded from housework because it is considered to be a woman's role; therefore, the expectation is that mothers and sisters do everything for them. In addition, compared to boys, girls are more protected and limited when travelling alone.

> "In Turkish families it doesn't matter if the boys are sighted or blind, generally we are not involved in these [household] kinds of work." (Gökhan)

> "My mum or my sisters used to do these [household tasks] things. Definitely, no chance was given to me to improve myself in these areas. Culturally, families would not like males to do these kinds of things." (Mustafa)

On the other hand, Ozlem and Gulsum explicitly commented on gender and protection and stressed that girls are protected more, by stating that they were not allowed to go out frequently which caused them to remain dependent on others. For instance:

> "I need to go with someone. For example, a couple of weeks ago the mother of a friend passed away, I needed to go there so I called my mum but she wasn't available. I was very sad but there was nothing I could do. As a male you can go alone if something like this happens, but as a female I couldn't." (Ozlem)

> "I never go out of the building alone. My family brings me to work in the morning and picks me up in the evening." (Gulsum)

Compared to the female participants, male participants seem to have been given fewer opportunities to learn household duties, yet are provided with more freedom to travel around. Similarly, female participants are more protected and limited than males in going out of their homes, whereas they are given more opportunities to learn and perform household duties. This is closely associated with patriarchal Turkish culture, and the role of men and women in society (see chapters 2 and 6).

4.7 Conclusion

Issues that have been explored in earlier parts of this chapter include: the experienced curriculum content and the consequences of this curriculum content on the lives of individuals with visual impairments; the ideal curriculum balance that should be available to individuals with visual impairments; and the barriers and enablers to achieving an appropriate curriculum balance to promote the independence of students with visual impairments. As has been outlined, it could be interpreted that participants think that the main barrier to independence is an inappropriate curriculum balance caused by a lack of appropriate training on the ECC. However, based on the reported barriers to and enablers for independence, focusing only on a lack of an appropriate curriculum balance may not be sufficient to explain the barriers to individuals with visual impairments becoming independent. The participants reported several factors which influence their independence (beyond ECC and associated teaching). Some factors can be described as individually-based and some of are socially-based explanations of disability. The next chapter presents the findings of second study which gathered the views of educators who serve people with a visual impairment.

Chapter 5. Study 2: the views of thirteen educators of children and adults with a visual impairment

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the data gathered from thirteen educators regarding ECC and associated teaching in Turkey. Similar to Study 1, in order to represent different views across the field, educators working in different settings were included: two of the lecturers from the only TSVI preparation programme in Turkey, two TSVIs who were working at RAMs, one itinerant TSVI, a subject (English) teacher working at a school for the blind, two classroom teachers at schools for the blind, two deputy head teachers at schools for the blind, two teachers from a PSEC and an instructor from an ARC were interviewed. The participants were located in three major cities. (For more information about the data collection and analysis process, see section "3.7 Study 2"). As discussed previously, this study is concerned with four preliminary research questions and these are used to organise the findings:

1. What is the balance of curriculum content experienced by students with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by educators?
2. What are the direct and indirect consequences of this experienced curriculum balance on lives of individuals with visual impairments as perceived by educators?
3. What is the 'ideal' curriculum balance which should be available for students with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by educators?
4. What are the barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum for students with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by educators?

In addition to these research questions, an important theme emerged from the data (and as my overall study developed), which added the following research question:

5. What other factors influence the independence of individuals with visual impairments (other than the ECC and associated teaching) as perceived by educators?

Table 5 Participants: Educators

Name Gender (Visual impairment)	Graduation / qualification	Current post, and previous relevant experience	Experience
Aysu Female	Special education	Retired university lecturer Founder and Director of the SEN Teacher preparation programme; Director of School of Education; Founder of the Research Centre on visual impairment.	40+ years at university
Bahar Female	TSVI	Lecturer at TSVI preparation programme	10+ university lecturer
Meral Female (Visually impaired)	TSVI	RAM PSEC	4
Berrin Female	TSVI	RAM Special day classroom: visual impairment with additional disability	5
Melek Female	TSVI	Itinerant TSVI PSEC	9
Tuğçe Female	TSVI	PSEC	8.5
Cansu Female (Visually impaired)	Early childhood education	PSEC School for the blind; kindergarten in mainstream; PSEC	8
Zehra Female	SEN/visual impairment	Deputy head teacher (school for the blind) Special day classroom for intellectual disability	19
Lutfu Male	SEN/visual Impairment	Deputy head teacher (school for the blind) Head of school for the blind; classroom teacher at school for the blind	20
Esra Female	TSVI	Teacher at school for the blind PSEC; RAM	6
Hasan Male	SEN/visual impairment	School for the blind RAM	13
Fahriye Female (Visually impaired)	English	Teacher at school for the blind tutor at university; teacher at school for the blind	17
Ali Male	Theology	Director of an ARC Teacher at an ARC; O&M instructor; orphan dormitory; day care	19

5.2 The experienced curriculum content

This section presents the data related to the first research question: the balance of the curriculum content experienced by students with visual impairments in Turkey, as perceived by the educators.

The participants of this study are mostly TSVIs who work(ed) in a variety of contexts, but whose opinions were broadly similar in a number of cases. Firstly that the balance of the curriculum emphasised the academic (national) curriculum and de-emphasised the ECC; secondly that this balance was not satisfactory, i.e. the ECC was not being taught sufficiently and that the national curriculum (academic skills) was being over-prioritised. Although this general position was strongly and consistently expressed in the interviews, there were some differences in explanation which were linked to the different educational settings in which the participants worked. Therefore, the analysis considers each of the settings in turn: schools for the blind; mainstream schools; and PSECs, before discussing the direct and indirect consequences of this curriculum balance on lives of individuals with visual impairments.

5.2.1 Schools for the blind

As explained in chapter 2, (under section “2.2 The context: education in Turkey”) there are currently sixteen schools for the blind in Turkey which serve students with visual impairments from grade one (age five or six) up to grade eight (age thirteen–fourteen). Six of the participants had worked or were currently working at a school for the blind. All these participants described that greater emphasis was being placed on the academic curriculum at schools for the blind, with relatively little or no time being given to ECC.

Esra, Aysu, Berrin, Hasan, and Lutfu reported that some training on the ECC was being delivered at schools for the blind. The following quotes show that although this was the case, the training is very poor and far from being sufficient:

> “I taught them how to go to the classroom, lunch area, playground, and toilet.” (Esra)

> “At the schools (for the blind), on O&M, self-care, independent living there is a limited amount of training that can be delivered.” (Berrin)

Even though participants reported that some training on ECC, and especially on O&M, was being delivered, Cansu, Fahriye, Zehra, and Tugce were pessimistic regarding training on preparedness for life.

> "I don't think a person will be prepared for real life conditions when they finish school because honestly, we do not deliver training on facilitating how to go from point A to point B. Clearly, we do not teach them 'you should go to the bus station, you should wait like this and take the bus this way and get there'. We do not deliver this training. We are in the classroom for six hours [and working on academic skills]." (Esra)

Overall, the participants reported that ECC was either not taught at all or was only being taught to a limited extent. Many felt this to be inadequate and an issue for concern for schools for the blind. Several reasons were reported as barriers in delivering the proper amount of training on ECC and these barriers are presented later in this chapter. However, in order to explain the curriculum content experienced by the students with visual impairments, it is essential to mention at this stage that the participants thought that the academic curriculum is prioritised and over-emphasised. This is the major reason why independence skills are not taught to students with visual impairments.

One exception to this general description of the curriculum balance at schools for the blind, and the general dissatisfaction with it, was offered by Lutfu. Lutfu, who was a deputy head teacher of a school for the blind, presented an alternative view of the situation, although his explanation contained some ambiguities. When Lutfu was asked about educating students with visual impairments, he provided the following answer:

> "Actually, when we are asked, we answer this question by saying, 'We are no different to typical schools. The only difference we offer is Braille.'" (Lutfu)

Even though Lutfu was prompted further about this, he did not offer any satisfactory evidence that indicated that ECC (beyond Braille) was taught sufficiently at his school. Furthermore, although he added that the school was teaching the national curriculum with modifications to make it more accessible for students with visual impairments, the only modifications that he mentioned were modifications to teaching materials and the creation of documents in Braille. Indeed, he stated that the school faced numerous challenges in both these areas of material development. This suggests that the focus of Lutfu's efforts and considerations were in relation to accessing the national curriculum, and had less concern for the development of student's independence via teaching the ECC.

Given that Lutfu was the deputy head teacher of a school and perhaps wanted to show it in a positive light it is unsurprising that he focussed the discussion upon what the school did (focus on the national curriculum, material modifications, Braille) rather than upon what the school did not do (ECC work). Nevertheless, I steered the conversation towards ECC and this seemed an effective strategy to encourage him to comment about training and the curriculum in other settings. Lutfu felt that students elsewhere were not receiving training in ECC in these settings either. After he was encouraged to comment about other schools and the ECC he provided a little more information regarding the ECC at his school:

> "We try to offer this training at primary school (grade 1–4), but because of the age of the students, they do not need this training yet. You cannot offer cane training to first or second grade students because their muscle development has not been completed. Cane training should be delivered toward the end of primary school, when muscle development is complete, but I do not have a teacher who will teach these skills." (Lutfu)

Lutfu's answer contains contradictions. Firstly, he claimed that some training was being delivered on the ECC, yet in the next sentence, he disproved this by claiming that students at his school do not need this training because they are too young, despite a number of empirical studies showing the opposite to be true (see Anthony, Bleier, Fazzi, Kish, & Pogrund, 2002; Fazzi, & Naimy, 2010; Wiener et al., 2010). He then stated that students are given training when they are at an appropriate age, yet he faced a lack of qualified staff to teach ECC. Nevertheless, towards the end of primary school, which he considered an appropriate age, the students would still be served by a TSVI at schools for the blind and TSVIs are dual-qualified in Turkey. Lutfu's views on readiness and the appropriate age to deliver O&M training were also interesting. Overall, they evoked the idea that he either did not have the necessary knowledge about O&M or that he did not see value in teaching ECC and was therefore making excuses for not teaching it.

Perhaps what made Lutfu stand out from other participants was that in spite of an apparent acceptance that ECC received little attention in his school (or elsewhere), he appeared not to see this as problematic. He seemed satisfied with the existing conditions, and thought that this balance was broadly adequate for the pupils he supported (at least in primary school). The reason(s) for this position are unclear: it may be, for example, that Lutfu had lower expectations of the students, or he did not understand the definitions of the ECC being discussed. Alternatively, he might have been being evasive in order to protect the reputation of the school. This is discussed further in chapter 6, including how Lutfu's satisfaction with

the curriculum provided by the schools can be contrasted with views offered by students who attended his school in the past.

Zehra, who is the deputy head of another school for the blind, described a similar situation. Like Lutfu she made explicit reference to the "standard" curriculum implemented both in mainstream schools and school for the blind:

> "The currently implemented curriculum teaches the same standard curriculum to students with visual impairments. That's what we do. There is no difference between mainstream schools and schools for the blind…The curriculum does not cover Braille, O&M or other things; therefore, you have to modify the curriculum but there are no guidelines. There are no limits; you don't know what to lecture on and what to leave out." (Zehra)

Lutfu and Zehra shared a view that access to the standard curriculum was important, and both had concerns about how this was done. Nevertheless, Zehra appeared to recognise that there were areas outside this standard academic curriculum ("Braille, O&M or other things'" which were not covered and she thought teachers were unsure how to draw boundaries on what should be taught and what is not.

As discussed, quite a few participants reported that schools for the blind were more focussed on academic training and that although educators might teach some skills covered in the ECC, this was only if they had time available after teaching academic subjects. Fahriye, Cansu and Zehra reported that in the past there had been lessons timetabled in schools for the blind to teach disability-specific skills; however, these lessons had been phased-out in favour of an emphasis on the standard curriculum implemented at all schools across Turkey. This suggests a historical shift in relation to the curriculum balance and this issue is discussed in more detail in section "5.5.3 The (non-)recognition of the ECC within the national curriculum".

5.2.2 Mainstream schools

The situation in mainstream schools, including secondary schools, is similar to that in schools for the blind yet it is more pessimistic; participants said that no training in ECC was being delivered at all in mainstream schools and reported a general dissatisfaction with this situation.

As Chapter 2 described, even though there are sixteen schools for the blind which serve children up to 8th grade, there are no specialist secondary schools for students with visual impairments in Turkey (see, section “2.2 School options for students with visual impairments in Turkey”). For this reason, all students have no other option than to attend a mainstream secondary school at this point (aged approximately 14) so the discussion about curriculum balance below includes reference to mainstream primary, middle and secondary schools.

Even though not asked, the majority of participants reported that they encouraged and supported the principle of mainstream (inclusion) for students with visual impairments. Related to this, seven stated that the number of students attending mainstream schools is increasing rapidly. Cansu, who has low vision, stressed that even though proper training in ECC was not delivered in mainstream schools, she still encouraged mainstream placements because she believed that schools for the blind also have inadequate training in ECC (which is in keeping with the above). To this extent, Cansu argued that a special school setting offered no advantage over a mainstream placement in relation to ECC provision. Moreover, she added that due to a lack of prevention and restriction (imposed at schools for the blind), mainstream schools may have advantages over schools for the blind. However, as it is exemplified in the following quotes, all participants reported that students with visual impairments receive no ECC training at mainstream schools, despite the fact that the number of students attending mainstream schools is increasing.

> “In an inclusive setting, the student has no way of learning the ECC…O&M, self-care, independent living, do not exist…There is nothing on these subjects in inclusive schools.” (Berrin)

> “If the student has no additional disability or has a lack of life experience due to a disability, we only modify the materials and assessment. We definitely do not change any goals, or benchmarks. In other words, whatever their classmate’s goals and benchmarks are, their goals and benchmarks are the same.” (Melek)

As illustrated, none of the educators thought any training in the ECC took place in mainstream schools in spite of the increase in the number of students with visual impairments attending these schools. The only exception to this was when Melek, an itinerant TSVI, took the initiative to teach O&M skills to her student:

> “I think I have to be honest, unfortunately. I only work with one of my students, who is in the middle school, during the last five minutes of the

> lesson on O&M and our route is from the classroom to the main door of the school." (Melek)

Although Melek reported that she was teaching six students, she reported working only with one of her students and for a very limited time on O&M. She expressed her dissatisfaction with this. It is also important to note that Melek stated that she was one of only two itinerant teachers in the entire country.

Berrin, a TSVI working at a RAM, indicated clearly that mainstream schools were not appropriate for students with visual impairments if they needed training in ECC and that attendance at a mainstream school was only part of what was required for "inclusive education":

> "When you place students into inclusive schools, the students are only physically included. It doesn't mean that they are receiving inclusive education…As I said the only thing in our country is physical inclusion." (Berrin)

This illustrates that teachers think that there is no training on ECC and training is limited to academic subjects at mainstream schools. Furthermore, as Berrin made clear, due to lack of support services, students are only physically included at the schools. The educators listed a number of barriers to the delivery of training in ECC and to achieving an appropriately balanced curriculum in mainstream schools. These are presented in a later part of this chapter (section 5.5).

5.2.3 Private special education centres (PSECs)

As discussed in Chapter 2, under section "2.2. Context; education in Turkey", Private Special education centres (PSECs) are established by private companies with law no.5580 (law on private education institutions) (Taşkın 2010). RAMs assess children with special needs, and based on the assessment results, children are then referred to PSECs to receive training and support. Beyond teaching Maths and the Turkish language, these centres may deliver training in independent living skills, physiotherapy and similar services (Çitil, 2007). Based on the RAM reports, students with SEN can receive up to twelve hours of service per week and the fees are paid by MEB. Even though these centres are not part of the compulsory school system, they are important in the education of students with SEN.

Two of the educators (Cansu and Tugce) worked in PSECs. Both said that their centre delivered training in the ECC as well as the academic curriculum. However, they were not satisfied with the curriculum balance and reported that they spent more time than was necessary teaching the academic curriculum and less time delivering ECC. Furthermore, even though they thought that their centre was possibly better than other PSECs in providing an appropriate curriculum balance, they concluded that most centres, including their own, fell short in terms of paying enough attention to the ECC. As a consequence, individuals with visual impairments were inadequately prepared to meet their own needs:

> "We do teach students with visual impairments how to travel by using O&M techniques. We do also work on self-care and independent living skills…We do definitely teach how to use a computer with a screen reader to those at the age of 9…We teach the skills covered in ECC but we generally focus on maths and Turkish language arts and we cannot spend as much as time as is needed on independent living, O&M, etc. due to academic subjects." (Cansu)

> "Training in ECC is not sufficient, it is not sufficient even in our own institution…Academic skills are prioritised; after we sort out the academic skills we pay attention to other skills." (Tugce)

Legally, PSECs are obliged to spend one third of their time on independent living and two thirds on academic subjects. Nevertheless, Cansu and Tugce stated that because of parents' wishes, desires and pressure, they spend most of this given time on teaching the academic curriculum and preparation for national examinations. Therefore, teachers at these centres spend most of their time on academic skills and not so much teaching ECC even if they might want to. Consequently, as is similar to schools for the blind and mainstream schools, the achieved curriculum balance at PSECs favours the academic curriculum.

On the other hand, Fahriye, who is an English teacher at a school for the blind, reported that some students were using their canes because of training they had received at a PSEC. This implied that cane use in schools for the blind was linked to the work of PSECs:

> "There are some students attending a PSEC who receive O&M training there along with their academic training; therefore, there are a few students using canes." (Fahriye)

This quote not only suggests that some training in ECC is being delivered at PSECs (which confirms the claim made by Cansu and Tugce), but it also highlights an apparent inequity: even though students attend a school for the blind, they receive O&M training from a different

centre. So what is it that makes schools for the blind special other than the development of teaching materials?

Overall, as will be discussed under section “5.5.6 Lack of support services”, all participants reported that there were no early intervention services for children with visual impairments and that these children only encountered SEN services when they reach school age. As a result, it can be argued that the need for training in ECC in schools is considerable. It might also be expected that intensive training in the ECC ought to be delivered to compensate for the shortage of early intervention services and to support children with visual impairments become fully independent. However, as illustrated, no educators who support children with visual impairments report that the services they are familiar with pay much attention to ECC across the education system; furthermore, the majority appear to recognise that an appropriate balance between academic skills and ECC was not achieved for these pupils. Many participants appear to think that under the existing circumstances, the majority of students with visual impairments would not be prepared to be fully independent individuals even if they might be academically sufficient. This touches upon the professionals’ views of the (negative) consequences of the current system and is explored further in the sections below.

5.3 Consequences of the experienced balance of curriculum content

This section presents the data related to the second research question: the direct and indirect consequences of the experienced balance of curriculum content on lives of individuals with a visual impairment.

Firstly, participants felt that the balance of the curriculum emphasised the academic (national) curriculum and de-emphasised the ECC. Secondly, they felt this balance was not satisfactory. As a result they reported several negative consequences of this curriculum balance on lives of individuals with visual impairments.

5.3.1 Developmental delays

Seven educators reported that the lack of training on ECC in early years may cause delay in different developmental areas; teachers listed intellectual development, communication and

general knowledge, psycho-motor development (movement skills), and social development as the areas which would be affected negatively. For example:

> "I saw hardly any children who only had a visual impairment, all of them had a secondary disability and the main reason for this was the lack of education (of ECC), and a lack of awareness in the family to promote interaction with the environment." (Meral)

In addition to a lack of training in the ECC areas, educators frequently complained about the parents and their parenting approaches (e.g. over-protection and not encouraging interaction with the environment). They considered these approaches to also cause developmental delays. Therefore, due to a lack of training in ECC and poor parenting approaches (and the interactions between these factors), educators think child development is affected and this results in developmental delays.

5.3.2 Limited movement

The participants were asked about the activities of their students. For example how they travelled from home to school and vice versa, within the school premises, and on social occasions. None reported students travelling independently. Moreover, six reported that due to a lack of training in O&M skills, students with visual impairments faced challenges even whilst moving around their schools. As a result students often did not move whilst they were on school premises; if they moved from their chairs they remained in their classrooms. For example:

> "Inside the school, generally they take their seat in the morning and stay there until they go home. Rarely, during the breaks do they move around." (Meral)

> "The ones who are not good at independent travelling sit in the classroom and most of them are like this. The ones who can travel independently are few. Therefore, most students sit in their classrooms." (Fahriye)

Similar results were revealed in Study 1, the young adults with visual impairments reported that they felt isolated due to a lack of independent travelling abilities. This issue will be discussed in more detail under the section "5.3.5 Isolation", and chapter 6 "Discussion".

5.3.3 Travelling without a mobility aid and injuries

Some students with visual impairment do not want to remain seated all the time. It was reported that on top of a lack of ECC training, using a cane was banned at some schools, even those for the blind. Therefore, some students with visual impairments travelled around without using any O&M aids or devices and this caused dangerous situations. For instance:

> "I notice that at the schools for the blind, doors are left open and since students are not using canes, they hit their heads sometimes passing out for several hours, or they will go down stairs and bump into each other." (Bahar)

Meral, Zehra, Esra, Fahriye, Lütfü, and Hasan added that some students move around without using any O&M aids. For example:

> "When they hear the bell, they stick out their arms, and run towards the garden." (Esra)

As this demonstrates, a lack of training caused some students with visual impairments to travel without any O&M aids and devices, and without any protection techniques (i.e. upper hand and lower hand protective techniques). This increased the risk of acquiring injuries. In light of Bahar's quote, it is also important to state that a poor physical environment at school might result in injuries.

5.3.4 Becoming dependent on others

All participants reported that an insufficient amount of training in areas of ECC was challenging individuals with visual impairments and causing them to "become dependent on others". Two quotes illustrate the general perspectives on this issue.

> "The system is creating people without self-care or independent-living skills making them completely dependent on others." (Bahar)

> "We see students who can multiply four-digit numbers with other four-digit numbers in their head but they cannot go and buy something alone from the school cafeteria." (Melek)

The educators thought that the existing school system (without direct instruction in ECC) was not preparing individuals with visual impairments for independent life. Berrin, a TSVI at an RAM, went on to claim that individuals with visual impairments could not live their lives

without support. Melek, who is an itinerant teacher, stated that there were some students who perform very well in academic skills but were not able to undertake certain independent living tasks which were basic for typically-developing children.

According to Berrin, Melek and Aysu, being incapable of meeting their own needs may also mean that people with visual impairments would face challenges in finding partners. Students were often unaware of this dilemma and instead of trying to be independent would want to be with someone who would meet their needs. For instance:

> "Some students said to me that they wanted to get married to someone sighted because there will always be something to deal with and someone needed to do these things." (Berrin)

5.3.5 Isolation, exclusion and issues in friendship(s)

All participants reported several concerns regarding isolation, exclusion and friendship(s) of individuals with visual impairments. As a consequence of not being fully independent "isolation" is reported frequently by all the participants. For example:

> "I would love to see them more in society. They should go to the cinema, theatre, do sports; I would like them to participate in many social activities. But it's very limited…because some of them have limitations in their life and live their lives in a very narrow way; they have to sit at home." (Bahar)

Even though social isolation was considered to be a consequence of not being independent, Fahriye, Berrin, Tugce and Melek went further and reported that a lack of independence skills, which occurred due to lack of training on ECC, caused people with visual impairments to be rejected from society.

> "I think the biggest influence of lack of training on ECC is being excluded, kicked out of society. Not being accepted by the social environment". (Berrin)

> "Unfortunately, there are people with visual impairments who finish school and get employed but they are not accepted even by their own community. I am pretty sure that the reason for not being accepted is their lack of social skills, O&M, and independent living skills." (Melek)

This view demonstrates that some educators were aware of the important link between ECC and social acceptance of individuals with visual impairments. The participants reported

several negative consequences of the lack of training in skills covered by the ECC but the most frequently raıse d one was “friendship”. People with visual impairments may have several people around them and these people may be helping them but it does not mean that they are friends. Berrin, TSVI at an RAM, shared her observations and the findings of her research for her Master’s study:

> “I looked into social relationships and friendship in my research and one of the findings was that students with visual impairments are not considered as friends…I implemented sociometry, and visually-impaired children generally were the excluded ones or ignored ones...Sighted students help their blind classmates in reading the board or going from a point to another one but they do not select these children as their friend.” (Berrin)

> “The students think ‘This classmate is blind; we should protect him and help him if he needs it, for example find his cane, move out of his way and not let the younger kids bother him at school; all of these are great but we don’t have to be friends with him. We don’t need to play with him’.” (Melek)

As these quotes illustrate, Berrin and Melek said that sighted students were encouraged to help meet the needs of their peers with visual impairment but they were not encouraged to include them in their games and accept them as real friends. As presented below in the “5.6.2.6 The role of society” section, Lutfu referred to a similar charitable support.

5.3.6 Stereotypical behaviours

Zehra, Meral and Fahriye reported that as a consequence of not being independent and of a lack of movement and interaction with the social environment (isolation), students with visual impairments appeared to develop stereotypical behaviours, which they considered to be unwanted. For example:

> “They may develop unwanted behaviours which are common among people with visual impairments such as eye poking, shaking in their chair etc.” (Fahriye)

As reported above, (in sections, 5.3.1; 5.3.2; 5.3.3; and 5.3.4), students with visual impairments may not be getting around, making friends and enjoying themselves and educators consider that these factors may have a role in developing stereotypical behaviours. Moreover, they acknowledged these behaviours as dangerous for health and

were negative factors influencing their social acceptance. Therefore, all three educators who commented on stereotypical behaviours desired the elimination of them.

5.3.7 Psychological challenges, unhappiness and dissatisfaction with life

Five of the participants reported that a lack of training on ECC, inadequate support and having to remain dependent on others could cause people with visual impairments to be dissatisfied with life and to become unhappy, thus facing psychological challenges. For example:

> "They would not enjoy life. The lack of skills would lead the person to be withdrawn and keep to themselves." (Lutfu)

> "They became less social, more depressive, and engrossed in their own things." (Tugce)

In human development the interaction between the individual and different layers of their social environment is crucial. As illustrated in the quotes above, due to a lack of proper training, teachers think that individuals with visual impairments will face serious challenges which would influence their life quality, e.g. psychological challenges, unhappiness and dissatisfaction.

5.3.8 Difficulties in accessing the academic curriculum

The analyses suggest that due to: (i) a lack of accommodation(s); (ii) a lack of training in ECC; and (iii) the shortage of materials and time, students with visual impairments may face challenges not only in their daily lives but also in accessing the academic curriculum. Hasan reported that when children were not trained in skills covered by the ECC it affected their grasp of academic skills too.

> "When they do not have these skills, it is very difficult to add on academic skills because it influences their learning process. As educators, we struggle if we need to teach academic skills or ECC skills." (Hasan)

As illustrated in the quote below, due to a lack of accommodation(s), students with visual impairments are excluded from some of the courses which require movement, even though they are part of the national curriculum.

> “In physical education classes students can easily be included, but because of there not being any adjustments students end up sitting in a corner and doing nothing.” (Bahar)

Moreover, some teachers claim that they used some of the lessons which were allocated to teaching the national curriculum to teach ECC.

> “Since there are no classes to teach the ECC, we try to do something in music, visual art, and physical education classes.” (Zehra)

Furthermore, due to a lack of accommodation, shortage of materials, and a lack of time and guidelines, educators frequently reported that even the national curriculum itself was not adequately taught. For example:

> “It is impossible for us to represent all of the visual information using alternative materials. Some of our teachers make the effort to demonstrate concepts in a tactile way, but it is impossible to be able to do all of them… it is so ambiguous. Everyone makes different decisions on what to teach and what not to teach. Since all subjects are linked, when you do not teach one it creates problems for teaching the next one”. (Zehra)

> “There are some subjects in the textbooks that our teachers face a tough time in teaching. The curriculum should be revisited. In regular schools, a teacher can solve ten examples and finish the whole subject, but in our schools the teachers cannot finish the topic in a lesson. They can only solve a problem. When you consider the whole year, you see that teachers cannot finish the entire topic(s), or they are not able to give all of the details about the subjects.” (Lutfu)

Zehra and Lutfu admitted they faced challenges in delivering the academic curriculum to students with visual impairments and ended up omitting some sections. In short, students with visual impairments seem to be missing a significant amount of learning experiences with regard to both the ECC and the national curriculum regardless of placement.

5.3.9 Difficulties in finding employment

Six participants reported that as a consequence of lack of training in the skills covered in the ECC and not being independent, people with visual impairments face challenges in finding employment. For example:

> “Since they would not have the skills, especially, self-confidence, to go and apply for a job or take examinations, they cannot do any job.” (Meral)

> "Since they cannot participate in a social life, this influences their employment." (Ali)

> "The bias of other people prevented their employment. But people with visual impairments bolster these biases with their behaviours due to shortage of their abilities in independent living skills and other skills covered in the ECC." (Tugce)

Therefore, educators think individuals with visual impairments face significant challenges in finding and maintaining employment due to a lack of skills, which is mainly to do with a lack of training in ECC; added to the challenge is the bias of employers.

5.3.10 Bias towards people with visual impairments

As discussed above, the consequence of curriculum balance seemed to influence personal development, and personal experiences within their narrow personal space (environment). However, as can be seen below, the poor curriculum balance seems to have greater influence on an individual with visual impairment than only affecting their personal environment.

As reported in Study 1 and in the later section of this chapter ("5.6.2.6 The role of society"), the majority of participants in Study 1 and Study 2 shared similar views and complaints about society's attitudes and biases towards people with a visual impairment. For example:

> "For each of our graduates with visual impairment, we have to fight with MEB because they don't want to hire teachers with disabilities." (Aysu)

Aysu is a university lecturer and her view is in-line with that of Zehra, who is a head of a school for the blind:

> "…according to me, a primary classroom teacher should never be a blind person, I do not approve of that. The teacher cannot see and the student cannot see; how will you control the situation? Most students have behavioural issues; therefore, I am against having visually-impaired primary classroom teachers. It should be considered carefully when they will be accepted into the field." (Zehra)

Even though Zehra is supposed to know about individuals with visual impairments and has extensive experience of what they can do, she still seems biased towards teachers with

visual impairments and does not want to have a teacher with a visual impairment at her school.

Furthermore, Tugce, Berrin and Meral argued that since people with visual impairments leave school without becoming fully independent or being able to meet their own needs, society views them negatively. The notion that all persons with visual impairment are dependent on others and cannot meet their own needs is generated and maintained, together with a biased view towards their employment prospects. For example:

> "The bias of other people prevented their employment. But people with visual impairments bolster these biases with their behaviours due to shortage of their abilities in independent living skills and other skills covered in the ECC." (Tugce)

> "Everything is linked to each other, a lack of education causes lack of independence, being dependent causes low self-confidence and is not productive, and this causes society to develop a negative stigma." (Meral)

It is possible then to conclude that, people with visual impairments who are not fully equipped with ECC skills are assisting society to develop negative attitudes and bias towards all people with visual impairments.

In summary, all educators who participated in this study listed several concerns regarding the consequences of a poor curriculum balance and, more specifically, a lack of training on the ECC. In many cases, the poor curriculum balance directly influenced the life of the individual. However some indirect social consequences were also reported. Below, the educators view on the "ideal" curriculum balance for students with visual impairments will be presented. Later on, I look at barriers to and enablers for achieving this balance.

5.4 The 'ideal' balance of curriculum

This section presents the data related to the third research question - the "ideal" balance of curriculum which should be available to students with visual impairments in Turkey, as perceived by educators.

One of the findings of this study was that all participants wanted to see people with visual impairments as independent individuals who can meet their own needs without being

dependent upon others. However, they did not think that the currently experienced curriculum content was sufficient to allow students with visual impairments to become fully independent. Furthermore, when asked about an "ideal" curriculum balance, all participants asked for more training on ECC and said that this training should cover all life skills learned and performed by typically-developing individuals. Despite this unanimity, there were different views on how and when this training should be delivered. Although eight educators thought that teaching ECC is a family's responsibility (see section "5.5.2.1 Educator Indifference"), there was a strongly-held view that itinerant teachers should teach ECC. For example:

> "I would like to see more itinerant teachers instructing students with visual impairments towards all their needs. They should deliver training in social skills, O&M and other areas." (Bahar)

The majority of the participants stated they prefer this training to be delivered by the itinerant teachers; however some teachers recommended more radical solutions. For example:

> "We would like to create a street with shops and a home with a kitchen, living room etc. and teach via real life experiences. But since the project is large, we couldn't start yet." (Zehra)

> "Treat blindness as if it is a job – these students should be able to receive training beyond maths, history, etc. Why should classes such as O&M, independent living etc. not be included in their programme? It could be done simply by adding a few classes to the schools' timetables." (Ali)

> "I think that there should be large independent living centres where these skills can be taught... Similar to NFB (National Federation of the Blind), there should be a big centre and at a certain age people should attend and receive the proper training." (Cansu)

As illustrated above, some educators recommend that ECC skills should be taught by classroom teachers, itinerant TSVIs, or at an external centre. Zehra's ideas seemed to be very interesting. Instead of delivering independence training in a real-life setting such as on a real-life street, she suggested creating an artificial situation. Cansu's view is also interesting. However, (as illustrated in sections "4.3 Consequences of the experienced balance of curriculum content" and "5.3 Consequences of the experienced balance of curriculum content") if students with visual impairments do not receive ECC training from their early years they may not have pleasant experiences, and this may put them off developing their independence in the later part of their life.

On the other hand, Ali asked for ECC-specific classes to be included in the school day, and Cansu suggested that instead of additional academic courses, training on ECC ought to be delivered. In other words, Ali and Cansu recommended that the curriculum balance shift away from academic skills instead to focus on independence skills. For example:

> "At schools, on the weekend, some courses are offered to support academic classes, but I think that instead of these courses independent living courses should be offered, such as cooking, cleaning, O&M." (Cansu)

Another important theme that emerged related to the gender of individuals with visual impairments. Lutfu, a deputy head teacher, stated that students with visual impairments should receive training on ECC skills based on their genders and roles in society:

> "Of course, at a school environment, it would be very good to teach cooking, ironing, folding clothes etc. for the girls. For the boys, it would be good for them to learn how to do shopping, money management and similar things." (Lutfu)

It appears that Lutfu thinks that females with visual impairments should be taught housekeeping skills and skills for the home. In contrast, he thinks that males should be taught the skills of work outside their homes. This has a close relationship with old Turkish traditions where the housewife is responsible for cooking, cleaning and looking after children while the husband is responsible for earning enough to keep his family.

All participants reported that the ECC should be taught more than is currently the case, beginning from the early years and nursery and carrying on through primary, middle and secondary schools. Moreover, Cansu (who has a visual impairment), Tugce, and Berrin went further and claimed that skills covered by the ECC were more important than academic skills for students with visual impairments and that they should therefore be prioritised over academic work:

> "The only way to exist in life is to have the essential O&M and independent living skills. I think a person needs to live their life independently to be happy. Otherwise, if dependent on the mother, father, siblings or anyone, when these people go away, that child will be like a fish out of water. This is the reason why ECC is more important than academic skills." (Cansu)

Even though the participants recommended teaching independence skills by reducing academic training, and this view may appear logical at first, it is important to note that they did not consider teaching independence skills alongside the academic curriculum.

To sum up, the definition of the "ideal curriculum balance" might be different based on the needs of each individual and context. However, all participants appeared to be in agreement, in that the currently experienced curriculum content is not appropriate and more training on ECC should be delivered to establish an appropriate curriculum balance: to prepare fully-independent individuals who are easily able to become part of their communities. Nevertheless, the data did not provide enough evidence to suggest how an 'ideal' curriculum balance could be established without a major reduction to the academic instruction. Nevertheless, based on my readings, work and personal experiences, I tried to outline how a better curriculum balance could be established, in current Turkey, please see section "6.4. The 'ideal' balance of curriculum" for more details.

5.5 The barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum

With the exception of one participant (Lutfu), no-one interviewed was satisfied with the current curriculum balance. Participants were also asked to share their views about barriers to and enablers for teaching ECC (and achieving an appropriate curriculum balance).

5.5.1 Family's role

At the national level, ECC is not assessed and since success is judged only by considering academic skills, teachers stated that most parents were not aware of the skills covered and did not support their children in receiving training on ECC. They preferred their children to receive training in academic skills rather than the ECC. For example:

> "I hear very few families saying 'teach my child O&M or independent living skills'. They always want their children to be successful in maths, Turkish, etc.…Parents do not care about O&M and independent living skills." (Cansu)

> "When the parents ask 'What did you do today?' if I say 'We worked on organisation skills' they would say, 'Hmm, is that all?' as if we didn't do anything, and the parents think we are wasting time by not teaching academic skills." (Tugce)

These quotes suggest that parents do not value ECC and wish their children to receive training only in academic skills. Despite this attitude, some participants reported that a few parents play a crucial role in accessing a balanced curriculum content:

> "Some of the more aware and educated families are trying to learn so that they can help their children. For example, one child was at the school for the blind, but mum worked hard and took her to a mainstream school and now she is asking me how she can teach some of the skills, such as O&M etc..." (Bahar)

Even though the majority of parents were not aware of the ECC, some were working hard to support their children by trying to learn the skills needed to fill the gap left by the school. These parents were acting as enablers for an appropriate curriculum, whereas the majority acted as barriers to achieving this by asking for training only in academic subjects.

5.5.2 Educators

Throughout the interviews, lots of different issues were reported regarding the educators.

5.5.2.1 Educator Indifference

One of the most frequently reported barriers to achieving an appropriate curriculum balance was teachers' indifference. In other words, teachers neither cared about the skills covered in the ECC nor promoted the independence of individuals with visual impairments. Simply put, they were disengaged and disinterested in the ECC. For example:

> "…some of our graduates followed the old tradition and did not teach O&M; they think 'it is not my business', what would happen if they had learned." (Aysu)

Furthermore, the view of the educators regarding the responsibility of teaching the ECC seems to be problematic. Eight of the thirteen participants reported that teaching the ECC was not their main responsibility and parents should be educated to teach the skills covered by the ECC. For example:

> "I think the families of young children with disabilities should receive training on how to raise a child with a visual impairment…The same goes for O&M, if the parents were educated, at least the children would be able to go in the garden and find their own school bus. They come and

> ask for canes but they don't ask how they to use it or where it is possible to learn such techniques." (Zehra)

Although the majority of educators believed that teaching ECC was the family's responsibility, some (Cansu and Tugce) agreed that these skills should be taught by educators. However, because of time constraints such instruction was left to families:

> "I think the role of family is very important – it is the most important. We see students for a lesson (which is 45 minutes) or for two lessons in a week, after which the child spends the rest of the time with their parents. Therefore, teaching these skills is left to parents." (Tugce)

Even though the educators reported that they did not deliver sufficient amounts of training in independent living skills, some blamed parents for students not becoming independent. Zehra, Lutfu and Hasan often criticised families and suggested that children were not independent because of parental attitudes and their reluctance to teach these skills to their children. This confirmed that educators consider it to be a family's responsibility to teach ECC and this attitude is a barrier to students receiving ECC training.

5.5.2.2 Lower expectations of the educators

In addition to "indifference", seven participants reported that most teachers serving students with visual impairments have lower expectations of them and did not think that people with visual impairments could be independent. Because of this, they were not willing to teach ECC and promote independence. This view was captured accurately in the following quote by Meral, a TSVI with low vision:

> "At the inclusion [setting]…all of the educators think that these kids cannot learn anything and even if they teach them what will happen? They look down on them, they don't think they can achieve well." (Meral)

> "After they get off the school bus, they go to their classrooms without any help. They never use a cane in the school because their mind map is great; for example where a completely blind student doesn't need to touch anything to find a door or exit… We do not have students travelling from home to school alone, as it is not possible and for them… I can say that each student at the school has the required amount of independent travelling abilities to get around the building. From kindergarten up to 8th grade, all students can go out of their classrooms, go to the toilet or garden and return to their classrooms without any problem…." (Lutfu)

Lutfu, who is a deputy head teacher in a school for the blind, reported that all students at his school, with the exception of students with multiple disabilities, could go from their classrooms to the toilet and the garden without needing help. Furthermore, he thought this was enough in terms of independence. However, his school for the blind serves students up to the age of fifteen and pupils of this age should be doing more than this. Lutfu also thought it was acceptable that none of the students could travel out of the school independently. This view echoed Meral's low expectations of students with visual impairments, and showed he did not think that a person with visual impairment could be fully independent.

5.5.2.3 Shortage of specialist teachers and hiring non-specialist teachers

According to the participants, there is an important need for qualified TSVIs across the nation; therefore, some cities may have very few or no TSVIs at all. For example:

> "When I was working in Bolu (city) I was the only TSVI in the entire city and I don't think anyone replaced me after I left." (Berrin)

Moreover, beyond the issue of the amount of qualified TSVIs, it appears that the few qualified TSVIs were not being used to their full potential:

> "Itinerant teachers cannot conduct their visits because they are stuck at RAM doing paper work (assessments and writing reports)." (Berrin)

One participant of this study, an itinerant teacher, reported several issues regarding her role and relations with other professionals. For example, she travelled each day to a different school and spent the entire day serving one student only. This was unnecessary. She could spend a couple of hours in a school and then go to serve another student nearby; instead she functioned as a resource room teacher or teaching assistant rather than as an itinerant TSVI. She also reported important communication issues with other educators as well:

> "Unless teachers ask me, I do not go to the classroom. I conduct one-to-one lessons in the resource room. From the perspective of the classroom teacher, each class has its own rules and setting and an outsider coming in may negatively influence the atmosphere. At least the classroom teachers think like that. They also think that the other students' attention will be disturbed, or they feel as if they [teachers] are controlled, inspected; therefore, they are not willing to accept me each day, each week. So, I work one-to-one in the resource room based on their guidance and directions." (Melek)

Generally, the itinerant TSVI is expected to guide the general education teacher on the needs of students with visual impairments, because itinerant teachers would be expected to have more expertise on visual impairment than general education classroom teachers. However, in this particular example, this did not seem to be the case. Melek and Aysu also added that due to ambiguity surrounding the itinerant teacher's position, even if the MEB wanted to increase the numbers of itinerant teachers, there was no interest in becoming an itinerant teacher among already-hired TSVIs. In summary, it can be said that the itinerant teacher model is undeveloped in Turkey and, along with the low number of qualified TSVIs, this causes problems in delivering training in the ECC.

Although the number of qualified TSVIs is low across the country, the few that exist are recruited into different roles e.g. at RAMs to do assessment and write reports. Therefore, general education teachers who are not qualified to teach students with visual impairments might be replacing them to serve students with visual impairments in mainstream schools and PSECs. Among several of the quotes, a few of them are illustrated below which represent the general view of educators on this issue:

> "At the schools which have resource rooms, teachers are not special educators; they can be primary school teachers, subject teachers or anyone without teaching qualifications, including supply teachers." (Berrin)

> "There are two schools for the blind in Ankara, and both of the teachers who are supposed to teach O&M are qualified in general physical education, they are not TSVIs or O&M specialists." (Bahar)

Participants also reported that since non-TSVI teachers were assigned to teach by drawing lots they might end up teaching students with visual impairments by luck of the draw. The following quote captures this view accurately.

> "Subject teachers do not know this field, visual impairment, at all, therefore, we face these problems…When they come here, they struggle; they don't know what to do. Furthermore, some of them have never met a visually-impaired person in their life and are not interested in working with students with visual impairments. These are big barriers. It takes one to two years until they get used to the challenges here, and then either they want to go, or they do not enjoy remaining here." (Lutfu)

It is reported that the number of teachers specialising in visual impairment is very low; therefore, teachers from outside the field are appointed to teach students with visual

impairments. Moreover, these teachers neither teach the skills covered in the ECC, nor involve themselves in activities to support the independence of students with visual impairments. Hiring vision specialists to perform different duties and hiring other educators who are not specialists in visual impairment to serve students with visual impairments is illogical and this might be another reason for some of the issues reported above (e.g. lower expectations, indifference). This issue is a barrier to the delivery of proper training in ECC and to the achievement of an appropriate curriculum balance.

5.5.2.4 Quality of the educators

With their indifference and the lower expectations of educators, qualifications of both TSVIs and regular teachers have been criticised:

> "I had a student attend my retirement presentation. Her O&M is very limited; she always needs someone around her. She is a TSVI at X school for the blind. She is a good teacher but she is not independent." (Aysu)

The quote above, by Aysu, a university lecturer, illustrates that TSVIs who graduate from the TSVI preparation programme and who are working at schools for the blind may not be well qualified and may require additional training themselves.

Subject teachers, like TSVIs, also reported to be unqualified in visual impairment, even though they were expected to teach some ECC specific skills. For example,

> "…in the middle school, as I said, we never had a physical education teacher and even if we had had one, they would have had no knowledge about visual impairment. They would not know how to use a cane and other O&M techniques and the ones who don't know these skills, I don't think can be helpful to our students." (Lutfu)

According to Ali, the director of an ARC, educators who serve adults with visual impairment at the adult rehabilitation centres (ARCs) do not have to have any formal specialist training in visual impairment either. Indeed, he graduated from theology department and did not have any qualification in visual impairment. In short, a lack of knowledge on the part of educators about the ECC and the needs of students with visual impairments appear to be barriers in teaching ECC and does not promote independence in schools and in adulthood.

5.5.2.5 The personal motivation of the exceptional educators

Even though the data illustrates that educators are barriers to teaching ECC, some participants attributed the delivered ECC training to the personal efforts of some teachers. For instance:

> "I have a friend who is working at a school for the blind and she is teaching O&M even though her school does not support using canes. She is doing it because she knows how important it is and it is her area of interest." (Cansu)

Educators who have a visual impairment themselves seem to be more sensitive to students' needs and therefore focus more on the ECC. Cansu, Meral and Fahriye, who are all teachers with visual impairments, referred more often to the teaching ECC than their sighted colleagues. In short, teachers are often barriers to teaching ECC, although some skills were taught if an individual teacher was interested. Since educators with a visual impairment could empathise and understand the needs of students with visual impairments, they appear to care more about the ECC and about developing the independence of students with visual impairments.

5.5.3 The (non-)recognition of the ECC within the national curriculum

The participants were asked to strain out an existing concept of an additional curriculum in Turkey. However, they did not know of such a widely used concept. Five of the participants (Aysu, Lutfu, Hasan, Meral and Tugce) reported that they taught academic skills and referred to skills covered in the ECC as "other things". For instance:

> "We don't have a term such as ECC, but O&M, independent living, etc. are used separately, we call them academic skills and other skills." (Aysu)

All five participants were prompted further as to whether there was a common name used to refer to ECC skills instead of "other things" or similar terms. However, none of them suggested or referred to a specific name which is widely used, thus their definitions of "other things" seemed to differ for each participant. Furthermore, Lutfu, Hasan and Tugce seemed unaware of all the areas covered by the ECC. They could only name a few during the interviews and when the interview was over, Lutfu asked the researcher to specify the areas of the ECC and made a note of them. On the other hand, Meral seemed to be aware of the importance of the ECC in promoting the independence of individuals with a visual

impairment. She talked about the sub-areas of the ECC (even if she erroneously referred to the ECC as “independent living skills”). She also added that these sets of skills were relevant to students with different disabilities.

It seems significant that participants referred not only to a lack of common language to describe the ECC, but also stated that ECC-associated concepts such as O&M and independent living, were not recognised within the national curriculum. It was reported that every school throughout the country implemented the same national curriculum, and what was taught in these lessons was identified and defined by MEB. ECC skills are not referred to in the curriculum and there are no specific lessons on the school timetable to teach these skills. For example:

> “It doesn’t matter whether it is schools for the blind, special day classrooms or inclusion; the curriculum is the same in all.” (Berrin)

> “Also, the ECC does not have a place in the school curriculum.” (Meral)

In addition to a lack of understanding about the ECC (an additional curriculum) concept, the educators complained about the non-flexibility of the national curriculum. They found the national curriculum to be quite rigid and therefore did not offer the chance to integrate ECC. Furthermore, since the national curriculum did not include or even recognise the ECC, there was no inspection covering these skills and teachers interpreted this to mean they were not mandated to teach them. This general view was illustrated in the following quote:

> “It is left to teachers. It is not compulsory and if a teacher doesn’t want to give it, it is totally fine.” (Bahar)

In summary, it is important to note that: (1) a lack of a common language to describe the ECC made it difficult to conduct a discussion about its contents and this caused difficulties in delivering the skills to students; (2) in trying to implement a universally-inclusive curriculum, the MEB missed nuances and did not recognise the specific needs of non-typical students, including students with visual impairments; (3) as the ECC is not included in the curriculum, this allowed the educators to avoid teaching it. Each of these points represents a barrier to implementing an appropriate curriculum balance.

5.5.4 Shortage of time

Seven of the participants reported that teaching students with visual impairments required more time than teaching non-disabled students. Therefore, they spent most of their time teaching the national curriculum rather than teaching the ECC. For example:

> "If you are teaching a skill to a sighted student, an hour is maybe enough but for a student with visual impairment you may be only able to pass on 25 per cent of that skill." (Meral)

> "I finished the first grade Braille and taught some of the contractions. But unfortunately, I didn't have enough time to finish it all. I had to teach Braille as well as finish the academic curriculum. Therefore, I couldn't spend too much time on Braille." (Berrin)

It is clear that teachers thought that shortage of time was a barrier in teaching ECC. Therefore, since they had to teach the academic curriculum, they prioritised this, as their main duty, after all, this is the main reason why they were employed.

5.5.5 Lack of teaching materials and physical conditions

According to participants another important barrier to delivering training on skills covered by the ECC is a lack of facilities and materials. For example:

> "At the school for the blind, self-care and independent living can be taught during the lunch break and at other free times, but beyond that there is no time and place where these skills [from the ECC] can be taught; so you cannot teach cooking or cleaning, there is nothing like that…Some PSECs may have training areas but most do not have an area to teach these skills." (Berrin)

Beyond physical conditions and facilities, all educators reported that they suffered from a shortage of materials to teach students with visual impairments. For example:

> "In the past, we couldn't find canes that were an appropriate length for students…" (Hasan)

Although educators reported a lack of proper facilities (e.g. kitchen), Hasan was the only participant who directly reported the shortage of ECC materials, such as canes. All other participants mentioned instead a shortage of more basic materials related to academic training, in particular Braille, maths, and science. This supports the view that the academic

curriculum is prioritised over ECC. These complaints might also be interpreted as proof of the challenges that exist in accessing the academic curriculum for students with visual impairments (see section “5.3.8 Difficulties in accessing the academic curriculum”).

5.5.6 Lack of support services

It was often reported that there were no support services available at mainstream schools for students with visual impairments: neither para-educators nor itinerant teachers. Students with visual impairments were also not served by assistive technology specialists, O&M specialists, adaptive physical education teachers or other specialists. Due this lack of additional support, students would not be learning ECC. For example:

> “At inclusive schools, students have no way to learn the ECC because classroom teachers do not know it and there is no additional support.” (Ali)

It was also stated that classroom teachers, who teach students with visual impairments, have no service (e.g. a TSVI) they can ask for support when they encounter problems.

On the other hand, although I did not directly ask separate questions about students with low vision, Lutfu and Hasan reported that there was no adjustment made for these students. They were either taught at schools for the blind like totally blind students or placed into mainstream schools without any additional support.

Similarly, although it was not reported explicitly, the lack of transition services seems to be a major problem. Aysu, Bahar, Lutfu, Hasan and Ali all mentioned that students were placed in inclusive settings without adequate planning or adjustments made to ensure the availability of vital services:

> “In the inclusion agenda, there is a radical approach. The students are immediately thrown in with mainstream kids and these children are expected to learn the skills by themselves. This is similar to throwing a person who doesn’t know how to swim into the sea then expecting them to learn how to swim in order to survive.” (Ali)

None of the participants talked explicitly about “transition” services; it is highly likely that similar to the ECC, there is no such concept in the Turkish context. However, some teachers unintentionally described a lack of transition services and how this could be a barrier to

creating a schooling environment suited to promoting the independence of students with visual impairments. In short, a lack of educational support and transition services for students with visual impairments might raise a barrier to achieving an appropriate curriculum balance and promoting independence.

5.5.7 Policy and legislation

All participants complained about the complexity of the special education system and its policies. Aysu reported that different special education schools and classrooms were governed by different sections of the MEB. This caused difficulties in meeting the needs of the students.

> "The interesting thing is that the special classrooms at the mainstream schools and the special schools belong to different administrative parts of the Ministry of Education. One department would have to write to another, and that one would have to write to another, then they would have to write to the human resources department, and because of the rules of the human resources department, they would say 'I cannot send you a teacher'. It is very complicated and presents many obstacles." (Aysu)

It appears that special education is not being governed in an ideal way and this causes problems in serving students with visual impairments, both academically and in the skills covered by the ECC. In order to achieve an appropriate curriculum balance, Aysu suggested that special education should be centralised in one department and policies to be fully implemented. (For a more detailed discussion on this matter, see chapter 7 – Recommendations).

All participants also identified either a shortage of necessary legislation, or poor implementation of the existing legislation as a barrier to achieving an appropriate curriculum balance. For example:

> "The itinerant teacher legislation was passed but it is not implemented fully." (Hasan)

> "We have adequate legislation and do not need amendments to the law. But in implementation, we fail. The laws are not implemented." (Aysu)

Although four participants asked for new legislation, the majority stated that there were already adequate laws and there was no need for them to be amended. However, there were

issues with regard to their implementation. This appeared to be a barrier to achieving an appropriately balanced curriculum.

In this section, barriers to and enablers for achieving a proper curriculum balance to promote the independence of students with visual impairments has been discussed. In the next section, other factors influencing the independence of individuals with visual impairments are presented.

5.6 Barriers to and enablers for independence beyond the ECC

As has been outlined above, many educators think that the main barrier to independence is an inappropriate curriculum balance caused by a lack of training on ECC. However, based on the reported barriers to and enablers for independence, focussing only on this lack of appropriate training may not be sufficient to explain the barriers to becoming independent. It emerged from the data that other factors beyond ECC training may play a role on the independence of people with a visual impairment. By drawing on the ICF, these factors can be categorised as individually-based and socially-based explanations of disability.

5.6.1 Individually-based factors influencing independence

Although some of the individually-based explanations overlap with the ECC and could be improved via direct and/or indirect instruction, personal characteristics of the individuals may also contribute, irrespective of the training they receive. Based on the data, individually-based explanations can broadly be categorised under five sub-headings: “remaining useful vision”; “internal motivation”; “joy of success”; “self-learning” and “fear”.

5.6.1.1 Remaining any useful vision

Meral, Esra, Berrin, Melek, Lutfu and Zehra reported that having some vision contributed to being independent and that students who have some useful vision were more independent than totally blind individuals. For example:

> “Generally the students who travel independently have some [remaining] vision. They can see a little.” (Berrin)

5.6.1.2 Internal motivation

Five of the participants mentioned that internal motivation was an important enabler which had a significant influence on becoming independent. For instance:

> "The ones who become independent do so completely based on their own effort. If they say 'I can do it' and work persistently, they can make it." (Meral)

The analysis suggested that internal motivation helps some individuals with visual impairments to get out of their classrooms and homes and keeps them going to become more independent.

5.6.1.3 Joy of success

Nine of the educator participants reported the "joy of success" as being a primary factor towards enabling independence, for example:

> "If the students try something and achieve it, they would be happy and this success will encourage them for the next task." (Zehra)

As captured in the quote above, "the joy of success" is not isolated from the environment. With the help of internal motivation, individuals with visual impairments would try to perform some activities. If they were to overcome the challenges involved in this, they would be empowered to tackle further challenges and become more independent.

5.6.1.4 Self-learning

Four participants reported that most independent individuals with visual impairments trained themselves. Because of a lack of ECC training at schools and after, people with visual impairments have to teach themselves these skills. For instance:

> "It depends on the individual because sometimes if they are willing to learn, they train themselves and increase their self-confidence." (Ali)

It is reported that presently, most independent people with visual impairments seemed to have taught themselves the skills required to improve their independence. It can be speculated that since there are neither additional support services at schools for students with a visual impairment, nor support services for adults post-school to deliver training in

these skills, it is natural that some people with visual impairments who want to be independent self teach these skills.

5.6.1.5 Fear

According to Ali, Esra, Fahriye, Hasan and Lutfu, some students with visual impairments were afraid of moving around and this fear appeared to be a barrier to promoting their independence. For example:

> "We have some students who are afraid of walking down stairs. They are afraid. When they step, they think they will fall; therefore, they cannot walk down the stairs". (Hasan)

This quote illustrates that there are very serious issues in the independence levels of students with visual impairments. Nevertheless, despite not having the necessary skills, some students are motivated to move around. These students may get injured and – as a result – "fear" may emerge and prevent independence.

5.6.2 Environmentally-based factors influencing independence

As both the ICF (2001) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 2005) Bio-ecological model claimed, beyond the individual explanations, the environment plays a crucial role in the development and participation of a human being in everyday life. In this section, environmentally/socially-based factors are considered in terms of how they influence the independence of individuals with visual impairments by acting as either barriers or enablers. These factors are presented from the closer circle to the outer circle as Bronfenbrenner (2005) suggested.

5.6.2.1 Family environment and parents' attitudes

As one of the central microsystems in Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological model, defined as the immediate Bio-ecological level influencing the development of the child, the family was often reported as being crucial in affecting the independence of individuals with visual impairments. As reported in section "5.5.1. Family's role", most participants spoke about the majority of parents not being educated about, or aware of, the importance of independence. They therefore did not know how to raise their children with visual impairment as independent individuals and did not provide opportunities to develop independence. Furthermore, participants believed that families did not know the capacities of children without vision with regard to certain tasks and therefore did not believe them to be capable of

being independent. As presented below, this results with them instilling fear into their children and restricting them and failing to meet their needs by being over-protective.

> "They don't think a person with visual impairment can get around independently or undertake responsibilities; therefore, parents undertake all responsibilities on behalf of their children." (Tugce)

> "There is a fear by the family that the child will become lost, and they act to prevent this…I have an old student, she wants to travel and go to the PSEC alone but her family do not allow her. They prevent her." (Fahriye)

As illustrated above, educators think that fear and low parental expectations regarding their children's capabilities are a barrier to developing the independence of individuals with visual impairment. In contrast, educated families are reported as enablers for fostering independence of individuals with visual impairments by giving them both chances to interact with their environment and positive feedback.

5.6.2.2 The school environment and teachers' attitudes

Outside of the family, one of the most essential elements in a child's social environment is educators. In addition to a lack of intervention on O&M techniques, Aysu, Bahar, Melek, Lutfu, Hasan, Meral and Cansu reported that students with visual impairments were prevented from using their canes and moving around inside and outside of school. For example:

> "We know that the students are not allowed to use their canes at the schools for the blind…I both worked and volunteered there for three years and they (the educators) never allowed the use of canes." (Cansu)

The only view denying the existence of a ban on using canes came from Esra, a TSVI at a school for the blind. Nevertheless, her words below illustrate the existence of limitations in using canes and hindering independence:

> "No it is not banned. Sometimes children lift their canes, may God prevent them, as God forbids it. The children may hit each other with the cane. There are some children whose control is very difficult. Maybe this is taken into consideration and personally some teachers recommend this [banning the use of the cane]. Nevertheless, we can still teach them how to use a cane [if we want to]." (Esra)

Simply, this quote could be interpreted as educators are allowed to teach and encourage the use of a cane but they choose not to do so.

> "…because of over-protection, I know that the children are not allowed to travel that much around. Especially in physical education classes, the children are asked to sit somewhere and not participate in activities because they are told you may fall or bump into others." Cansu

As reported above, children with visual impairment are often over-helped and their needs are met by others. Hasan, Cansu and Fahriye stated that not only parents but also educators sometimes prevent the promotion of independence of children with visual impairment by "over-helping". In short, offering too much assistance, banning the use of a cane and limiting and preventing children with visual impairment from moving around at the school, all these are factors that inhibit the development of independence. In contrast, Meral, Fahriye, Aysu, Esra and Hasan reported that encouragement from the teachers is very important to the development of the independence of students with visual impairments. Although some educators play an enabling role, the majority of them are considered barriers when promoting the independence of students with visual impairments.

5.6.2.3 Role models and friends

Another important microsystem in the Bio-ecological model is the relationship between the individual and their peers. According to five participants, role models and friends play a significant part in developing the independence of people with visual impairments. For instance:

> "Seeing their friends who are self-confident in travelling independently does help them to increase their own motivation and confidence to travel as well." (Meral)

As an essential microsystem, friends who act as role models appear to be important in promoting the independence of individuals with visual impairments, especially when ECC training is not available at schools.

5.6.2.4 Adult rehabilitation centres (ARCs)

Some issues were reported with the delivery of training at the Adult Rehabilitation Centre (ARC) (e.g. limited expertise of the trainers and inappropriate content of the training).

However, Ali and Fahriye reported that training delivered at the ARC is effective in promoting independence. For example:

> "We had a male student. When he came, he used to hold the wall with both hands because he was so afraid. After he received training, his self-confidence increased gradually...That student is very confident now and can travel all over the country alone." (Ali)

In summary, despite existing issues, it appears that the current training programme at the Rehabilitation Centre does play a crucial role in developing independence of the trainees.

5.6.2.5 The physical environment

One of the most often reported barriers to being independent was a poor physical environment. For example:

> "Lifts do not have audio outputs. There is only one audio output at the pedestrian crossing at Gazi University; you cannot see them anywhere else in Ankara. Cars park on the pavement. How can you become independent? They [physical barriers] are the main barriers to being independent. Under these circumstances, in Ankara or in any part of Turkey, people with visual impairments are prevented from travelling independently. It is even difficult for a sighted person." (Aysu)

All participants listed the poor physical environment as being a major barrier to becoming independent for individuals with visual impairments.

5.6.2.6 The role of society

The exosystems layer of the Bio-ecological model relates to the broader community in which the person lives (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The majority of participants reported that society played a crucial role in the independence of individuals with visual impairments but due to a lack of awareness about the needs of people with visual impairments, society's actions may discourage people from being independent. For example:

> "Even if you have a cane in your hand, at any time, someone may come and bump into you; sometimes people do not know that a person with visual impairment carries a cane." (Cansu)

> "Negative approaches of people in society hinder the independence [of those with visual impairments]. They would ask us as well, 'don't you have a family, why are you out alone?'" (Fahriye)

As illustrated above, the participants reported that society's lack of awareness and negative approach to visual impairment hindered the independence of individuals with a visual impairment. In contrast, Lutfu considered society to be an enabler. For example:

> "As you know our society loves to help blind people; therefore, by using the public's help, they get around." (Lutfu)

It is important to note that although Lutfu sees over-help by the family as a barrier to independence, he does not see help by society as a barrier to independence. In fact, Lutfu seemed rather to view it as an enabler.

5.6.2.7 Politicians

According to Bronfenbrenner, the fourth layer of the Bio-ecological model is the macrosystem, and this contains the attitudes and ideologies, values, and laws of a culture (2005). This layer has a major influence on individuals with visual impairments, for example through policy that impacts on conditions affecting their lives.

Two participants, Cansu and Meral (both educators with a visual impairment), said that politicians acted as barriers to both the provision of proper training and to the creation of an appropriate environment to enable independence. According to them, politicians did not make the necessary adjustments and were abusing the issue of disability in order to gain more votes. The quotes below capture this view well.

> "Generally, they give some money and this is for disabled people. They think they have done whatever they are supposed to do. But I think instead of this money, they should supply materials and prepare specialists to instruct in how to use these materials." (Cansu)

> "Unfortunately; politics is not sincere in Turkey towards disability. They always think 'how can we pay people with disabilities and avoid making the changes that will help to foster independence and yet we can still be admired'. They would say 'We are serving and giving money to people with disabilities' and thus create the image of protecting the weak; this would help if they were to expand their support benefits." (Meral)

The participants clearly believe that politicians who are responsible for disability-related departments at the level of the state are not willing to make adjustments so that individuals with visual impairments can become independent. Instead, they prefer to present a picture which will help them increase their share of the vote and present themselves as if they were supporting disabled citizens.

5.6.2.8 Cultural values and overprotectiveness

According to Bronfenbrenner, the macrosystem, the outer layer of the environment, contains the attitudes and ideologies, values, laws and customs of a culture or subculture (2005). In this section, the influence of culture on independence is illustrated.

Over-protectiveness of the family was repeatedly reported by educators. Aysu and Zehra added that over-protectiveness was not only specific to individuals with visual impairments but that parents were also over-protective toward non-disabled children. For instance;

> "Unfortunately, most parents are over-protective and they are surprised when they see a person with visual impairment being independent and ask, how could you do it, how can you do it? It is not only a problem with people with disabilities; we raised our children (including non-disabled) with over-protectiveness and with not giving them responsibilities. It doesn't matter if they are 40; we still want our hands to be on their life. And this is cultural." (Aysu)

Over-protectiveness might be harmful in developing the independence of individuals with visual impairments. It might also be considered as the norm in Turkish culture. However, the perspective of participants on gender differences was also an interesting theme.

As mentioned earlier, six of the participants referred to gender differences and related issues directly and indirectly. The general view was that traditionally girls with visual impairments were more protected and limited than boys with visual impairment. Furthermore Lutfu, a deputy head teacher of a school for the blind, argued that students with visual impairments should receive training on the skills covered in the ECC based on their genders and roles in the society (see "5.4. The "ideal" balance of curriculum"). With that exception, all participants who referred to gender issues highlighted a restriction and over-protectiveness over the females with a visual impairment. For example:

> "The boys are at an advantage with regards to travelling independently because they can meet at the Association for the Blind. The girls are

> more isolated. They are left to watch TV, do some knitting or hand art." (Aysu)

> "It is much more painful to be female and disabled. If you are a disabled girl, it is a much bigger problem because you are much more restricted." (Cansu)

It appears that some parents give less freedom to females who are visually impaired than to males. From the participants' perspectives on gender differences, it could be speculated that even if individuals with visual impairments received the ideal training on independence, due to cultural norms they may not be able to become fully independent. This applies especially to females with visual impairments who might be more protected and restricted than males.

5.7 Conclusion

As discussed above, none of the educators reported that the services they are familiar with pay much attention to the ECC. Therefore, the majority appeared to recognise that an appropriate balance between the academic curriculum and ECC was not achieved for pupils with visual impairments. Every educator who participated in this study listed several concerns regarding the consequences of this poor curriculum balance and, more specifically, the lack of training on ECC for pupils with visual impairments. The current curriculum balance and lack of a proper ECC training seemed to cause people with visual impairments to be dependent on others and this has a wider negative influence on an individual's quality of life. Furthermore, individuals who are not able to meet their own needs contribute to the societal bias toward all individuals with a visual impairment. On the other hand, the definition of the "ideal curriculum balance" might be different based on the needs of each individual and context. However, all participants appeared to be in agreement regarding the currently experienced curriculum content, in that it is not appropriate and more training on ECC should be delivered to prepare individuals who are fully independent and are more easily able to become part of their communities. Nevertheless, the data showed that beyond the ECC and associated teaching, there are further barriers to independence for individuals with visual impairments. These broadly categorised as individually-based factors (e.g. "remaining useful vision", "internal motivation", "joy of success", "fear") and socially-based factors (e.g. "family environment and parents' attitudes", "role models and friends", "physical environment", "cultural values and overprotectiveness").

Each study up to now has been analysed separately in relation to the research questions. The next chapter attempts to blend the findings of the two studies to discuss the research questions along with existing literature, whilst simultaneously questioning why the findings may be so.

Chapter 6. Discussion

6.1 Introduction

Overall, this research project is made up of two studies; Study 1 explored the views of young adults with visual impairments and Study 2 took views of educators who are serving children and young adults with visual impairments. Both studies asked four preliminary research questions. These questions were:

1. What is the balance of curriculum content experienced by students with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
2. What are the direct and indirect consequences of this experienced curriculum balance on lives of individuals with visual impairments as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
3. What is the 'ideal' curriculum balance which should be available for students with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
4. What are the barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum for students with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?

As mentioned in chapters 3, 4 and 5, during the progress of the research an important theme emerged and added the following research question.

5. What other factors influence the independence of individuals with visual impairments (other than the ECC and associated teaching) as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?

Each study up to now has been analysed separately in relation to the research questions. In this chapter, I blend the findings of the studies and discuss the research questions with reference to the existing literature whilst simultaneously questioning why the findings reveal what they do.

6.2 The experienced curriculum balance

This section covers the discussion regarding the findings of both Study 1 and Study 2 in relation to the first research question: what is the balance of the curriculum content (academic versus additional) experienced by young adults with visual impairments in Turkey?

Chapters 4 and 5 reveal an overall dissatisfaction with curriculum content as experienced by young adults with visual impairments. In particular, there was dissatisfaction with the low level of attention given to additional aspects of the curriculum (ECC). This dissatisfaction seemed to hold broadly true for both young adults with visual impairments and educators. Nevertheless, there were nuances in participants' views in relation to educational settings (schools for the blind, mainstream schools and private special education centres (PSEC)). In addition, concerns were also raised about access to the academic curriculum, and again, these differed across educational settings. Below, each of these points are discussed in turn.

6.2.1 Schools for the blind

There were strong views from both sides regarding there being no appropriate ECC education offered across the education system, including in schools for the blind. Both educators and young adults with visual impairments offered several specific criticisms regarding schools for the blind. Although educators and some young adults with visual impairments referred to the existence of training in a few areas of the ECC, none described a satisfactory level of training or preparation for independence. A crucial way students with a visual impairment can become independent is by mastering ECC skills (Hatlen, 1996, 2000), and the literature in Turkey confirms the findings of this study regarding the existence of no appropriate ECC instruction. For instance, Kesiktaş & Akçamete (2011) collected data from 224 TSVIs across Turkey and focused on the implementation of the TSVIs' standards. They found that the only ECC-related standard (social skills) is ranked as the least practised standard. See also Altunay-Arslantekin (2015) for a lack of O&M instruction at the schools for the blind in Ankara.

Although all participants, including educators (except Lutfu), expressed their dissatisfaction with the curriculum balance at schools for the blind, the educators appeared to be less negative than young adults with visual impairments. It is also important to note that teachers who were visually impaired (Cansu and Meral), were more negative regarding the present

curriculum balance, as compared to their sighted colleagues. This supports the view that there was a significant discrepancy between what the professionals working with people with a visual impairment deem to be a suitable service and what people with a visual impairment themselves deemed to be suitable. Therefore, the findings of this research highlighted this gap.

An explanation for this discrepancy could be that the majority of participants attended the same schools for the blind (although some participants attended three additional ones), whereas the participants of Study 2 were educators working in different institutions (see Table 1 and Table 5). It is possible that there is a different curriculum balance experienced in different institutions; for example, different schools have different policies and/or the attitudes of educators and head teachers. In other words, if there was a poor curriculum balance at the particular school for the blind attended by the majority of the participants from Study 1, this could account for the high level of dissatisfaction regarding the experienced curriculum balance among individuals with a visual impairment.

Another explanation might be that since the participants of Study 1 attended school some time earlier (between five and twenty years ago), we might be comparing past practices with those existing in the present. The literature review highlights that several studies have pointed out that there has been a significant change in the general view regarding the role of schools on teaching academic curriculum verses an additional curriculum in the USA (e.g. Lohmeier et al., 2009; Lohmeier, 2005, 2006, 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2007, 2010). Before the 1990s most schools in the USA were perceived as being responsible for teaching academic skills (the national curriculum), whereas from the 1990s onwards (especially in the 2000s) schools began to recognise the learning requirements of individuals with a visual impairment (Hatlen, 1996, 2000; Lohmeier, 2005). Therefore, schools began to offer more training on ECC skills in order to prepare individuals with a visual impairment for an independent life. In short, since the young adults with visual impairments questioned in this study attended schools some years ago, the discrepancy regarding the experienced curriculum balance might be due to this shift (regarding how schools for the blind pursued their roles and what they prioritise). However, it is not known whether there was such a shift in Turkey and further research would be required to ascertain this.

Another explanation might be that sighted educators do not understand the actual needs of students with a visual impairment due to the inadequacy of their teacher preparation

programmes. This may have led them to over-estimate the quality, effectiveness and content of their instructions and underestimate the requirements of students with visual impairments. However, educators who themselves had a visual impairment were more empathetic to young adults in the same situation; therefore, they are in a better position to understand a student's unique needs and assess the effectiveness of offered instruction. Consequently, teachers who have a visual impairment illustrated a more negative view regarding the present curriculum balance than their sighted colleagues.

There is another possible explanation for this discrepancy and it involves a potential conflict of interest. The educators may have wanted to protect their school and their own reputation by projecting a better image and exaggerating the quality of their services. This was discussed in the previous chapter, section "5.2.1. Schools for the blind", with regard to Lutfu, a deputy of a school for the blind who seemed to want to project just such an impression; young adults with visual impairments, on the other hand, did not have such a need to protect reputations. Indeed, since most participants from Study 1 attended the school where Lutfu worked, and were very disappointed with their education and preparedness, I feel it safe to conclude that educators may want to protect their school and their own reputation by projecting a better picture and exaggerating the quality of their services.

6.2.2 Mainstream schools

As reported in chapter 4, none of the participants with a visual impairment whilst at a mainstream school, received any direct training on ECC. The educators appeared to be in agreement that this was generally the case across the country. However, it should be noted that, with the exception of the itinerant teacher, this study did not include any participants who were serving as teachers at mainstream schools. As a result, further investigation is needed and findings of this study need to be treated cautiously. Nevertheless, based on these findings, it appears that students are physically included in mainstream schools and classrooms, but support in relation to the additional curriculum and access to the academic curriculum is lacking. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of specialists and support services in the mainstream setting (see Bayram et al., 2015; Göl, 2014; Gul & Vuran, 2013; Ünlü et al., 2010). In conclusion, Turkish mainstream schools – which are often referred to as inclusive – don't provide adjustments needed to meet the needs of both students with visual impairments and those with different special needs. They do not deliver instruction on ECC, nor do they provide adequate access to the national curriculum. Although many authors would advocate that under optimal circumstances all children, including those with a visual

impairment, should be educated in mainstream schools without any additional provision and curriculum (Liasidou, 2012), the findings of this study showed that under the existing circumstances, individuals' unique requirements are not met at mainstream schools. This finding is supported by concerns raised in other studies, whereby academic skills are prioritised and other skills, like ECC, are not paid enough attention (e.g. Feng & Sass, 2013; Greenstein, 2014; Lynch & Baker, 2005).

Interestingly, participants with a visual impairment who never attended a school for the blind did not regard their lack of training in ECC areas at schools as being the fault of the education system. Instead, they perceived it to be their own fault for attending a mainstream school i.e. their expectations of mainstream settings were low regarding ECC training. Moreover, these participants thought that schools for the blind would offer more training on ECC than mainstream schools; two participants had in fact transferred from mainstream schools to a school for the blind with the hope of receiving ECC training (see section "4.2.1 The balance of the curriculum content" for a more detailed discussion). This is evidence that participants consider mainstream schools and schools for the blind to have different roles: schools for the blind are supposed to teach vision-specific skills, whereas mainstream schools are only responsible for teaching academic subjects. Participants might have thought because they looked at the situation based on their schooling experiences, whereby there are no specialist teachers and facilities to teach the ECC skills at mainstream schools. Since these resources are available at schools for the blind, they anticipated that ECC training would be delivered at there. Simply, they did not think it was possible to employ TSVIs at mainstream schools and that it was possible for them to receive ECC training at the schools they attended.

Ironically, given the previous discussion, none of the participants who transferred from a mainstream school to a school for the blind found the latter schools to be any better than the mainstream ones in terms of ECC training. As Akçamete, Kaner, Sucuoğlu (2001), Ataman (2005), Çağlar (2004), and Ozyurek (2008) argued, several of the teachers working at schools for the blind had no historical expertise in visual impairment. This was especially true for those teachers who were teaching 5th grade and above (year 9+) who were ordinary subject teachers without any qualifications in SEN. When dealing with issues of the national curriculum (e.g. inflexibility and a lack of recognition of the ECC), teachers attitudes (e.g. indifference and lower expectations of students with visual impairments), as well as the lack of time available to teach the entire academic curriculum and the ECC, this lack of teachers'

expertise seemed to be a contributing factor to there being no instruction on ECC for students who later transferred to a school for the blind from mainstream schools.

However, it needs to be noted that although training for life-preparedness at schools for the blind was dissatisfying, it still appeared to be better than the training available in mainstream schools. One of the main reasons for this was the lack of specialist educators in mainstream schools which was in contrast to schools for the blind some of which had qualified TSVIs. Another possible explanation as to why schools for the blind appeared better equipped to meet the needs of students with a visual impairment is that historically, educators with a visual impairment were not allowed to work at mainstream schools in Turkey. If they were allowed to work at all, they worked at schools for the blind. Although this situation has improved – and discrimination was banned in 2013 – schools for the blind still have more teachers with a visual impairment than mainstream schools. Therefore, these staff would have a better understanding of the educational needs of students with a visual impairment because of: (i) personal experience and (ii) their expertise in the field. As Çitil (2007) and Enç (2014), describe, if something positive is happening it is often due to the personal action(s) of some activist educators. Some teachers (especially those with a visual impairment) took the initiative and taught components of ECC at schools for the blind.

Interestingly seven of the young adults with a visual impairment reported that their school experience contributed to their overall development in some important skills – this is despite several complaints concerning the lack of training on ECC at both mainstream and segregated schools. Principally they thought that the school environment helped them to be more sociable and to develop self-confidence. Since they stated they did not receive any specific (direct) training, this suggests that the school environment enabled them to learn either by a “sink or swim” attitude or by informal learning from their peers. This is highly conceivable and is in line with findings offered by Douglas & Hewett (2014), who found that young people with a visual impairment said their independence was often developed from practice at school and of having to self-advocate and ask for things, and from benefitting from more confident role models (p.92). A final explanation could be that general teaching practice in relation to the national curriculum might cover these skills for all students regardless of their ability or disability. This provides evidence that when a teacher plans the class session well to include students with disabilities those with a visual impairment can learn some skills alongside their sighted peers without the need of any segregation or

specific instruction. This is in keeping with authors who advocate inclusive approaches (e.g. Liasidou, 2012; Slee, 2011; Thomas, 2012, 2013).

It also ought to be highlighted that although many of the participants referred to mainstream school placement as “inclusion”, I would advocate that it is not appropriate to call it inclusion due to the absence of essential components required to include all students; therefore, I am intentionally substituting the term “inclusion” with “mainstream setting(s)”. The system implemented in Turkey cannot be deemed inclusive because students are not taught the necessary skills before they are included in mainstream schools; neither did they receive any vision specific training in mainstream settings. Furthermore, appropriate accommodations and additional support for their disability, which would ensure access to the academic curriculum were not delivered. Therefore, the term “inclusion” should be treated cautiously.

6.2.3 The role of private special education centres (PSECs)

As a result of a change made in 2005, to law no.3797, “Organisation and Duties of MEB”, private special education centres (PSECs) were created and established over time. Accordingly, children with SEN are able to receive training and support from PSECs and a proportion of the fees are paid by MEB (Çitil, 2007). These centres are not regular schools, but instead they offer after-school support to students with disabilities. Based on the findings, it is safe to conclude that the MEB recognised that the needs of students with special needs could not be met in a traditional school setting and, as a result of not having necessary resources to close this gap, the MEB encouraged the establishment and use of services from PSECs via contracting, to meet the needs of students with SEN.

However, based on the Special Education Regulation (Özel Egitim Kurumlari hakkinda yonetmelik, 2012) each student should receive a maximum of up to twelve hours training in a month. in addition, PSECs are mandated spending only “one third” of this twelve hours of teaching time on teaching “independent living skills”, which is the only area specified from the ECC, and “two thirds” of their time teaching the academic curriculum, which is already taught at the schools.

This indeed highlights an acceptance that public schools in Turkey cannot meet all the needs of students with SEN, including those with a visual impairment, both academically and with the additional curriculum. Therefore, the MEB contracts external PSECs to deliver “two thirds” of their time on academic skills and “one third” on independent living skills. This time

ratio also highlights that the MEB considers that there should be a balance between academic curriculum and the ECC (by emphasising “two thirds” and “one third”).

However, it is important to highlight, as in chapter 5, section “5.2.3. Private special education centres”, despite the amount of training delivered on ECC at Parıltı PSEC, which is more than delivered in schools for the blind and mainstream schools, it was still some way from meeting the needs of individuals with a visual impairment. Although, it must be acknowledged that only one PSEC was included in the study (Parıltı PSEC) and this centre has a reputation for offering excellent training for students with a visual impairment. Therefore, the result of this study needs to be treated cautiously. Parıltı PSEC is a non-profit organisation and was founded by parents of individuals with a visual impairment (Parıltı, 2015), whereas other PSECs were established by private enterprise. This difference in organisational history may suggest that there is a difference in emphasis of goals and quality of service. This study did not intend to reveal this, but it is an aspect that is worthy of further study.

Indeed, one educator with a visual impairment at a school for the blind specifically stated that students were using canes because of training they received at Parıltı PSEC. Although this is strong evidence that ECC training is delivered at Parıltı PSEC, it also highlights an apparent inadequacy of schools for the blind: even though students attend a school for the blind they receive O&M training from a different centre. This raises the question of what schools for the blind are doing differently to mainstream schools, and challenges the advantage of having segregated institutions if students are not offered training in ECC. Similarly, this raises concerns regarding roles and responsibilities of PSECs. If PSECs are spending the majority of their time offering instruction in Turkish and maths, and if students are also attending schools for the blind and mainstream schools where they are taught national curriculum subjects (including maths and Turkish), it begs the following questions: (i) why are these subjects being retaught; and (ii) why is only one third of the time allocated for teaching ECC skills? Moreover, as stated clearly in chapter 5, section “5.2.3. Private special education centres”, even during the short time which is allocated for teaching independent living skills, academic subjects are often taught in PSECs instead. This raises the issue of whether PSECs’ roles need to be redefined and if they would be better off focussing on ECC training leaving the academic instruction to schools for the blind and mainstream schools.

6.2.4 The academic curriculum

Since the experienced curriculum balance has been discussed it is important to consider how the national curriculum is also taught. Unfortunately, poor education in ECC appears not to be the only reported problem at schools for the blind and mainstream schools. The majority of educators and participants with a visual impairment also shared concerns about receiving instruction on components of the national curriculum. In the context of the schools for the blind it was reported that some curriculum content was simply not taught to students, as it was seen as being too complex to manage, given the limited materials, knowledge and expertise of the educators. This is not the case in mainstream schools, where the curriculum content was followed more rigidly. Nevertheless, schools for the blind did make adjustments and offered accommodations to the presentation of teaching material: e.g. presenting in Braille. By contrast these did not take place in mainstream settings.

Literature on visual impairment in Turkey confirms that there are difficulties in accessing the academic curriculum in mainstream schools for students with a visual impairment. For instance, Bayram et al. (2015) conducted a small-scale research study to investigate the experiences of secondary school students with visual impairment in learning maths in Turkey and their findings confirmed a lack of accommodation and services. In another study investigating the views of students with visual impairments in secondary (mainstream) schools – specifically regarding learning physics in Turkey – 17 out of 24 students considered physics to be difficult and claimed that there was a lack of adequate materials for accessing the concepts (Ünlü, Pehlivan & Tarhan, 2010). Similarly, Bülbül (2013, 2014) highlighted difficulties for students with visual impairments when accessing science (particularly, physics) due to lack of materials in Turkish classrooms. Therefore, although the national curriculum is offered more rigidly at mainstream schools, it is not necessarily offered in an accessible manner.

In other words, the segregated system seems to be a little more beneficial than mainstream schools, as individuals with a visual impairment can receive instruction on a curriculum that is specifically tailored to their needs (Jenkinson 1997), whereas mainstream classrooms did not tend to have such advantages (see section “4.3.4. Challenges in accessing the academic curriculum and lower achievement”). This points to the dilemma highlighted by Norwich (2013) regarding the nature of schools and what they should focus on in terms of learning and teaching. The analysis suggests that both educational placements fail to offer appropriate instruction in both ECC and the academic curriculum because the mainstream

schools deliver instruction on all areas of the curriculum, albeit not in an accessible fashion, whereas schools for the blind offer instruction in a more accessible fashion, yet skip some sections of the national curriculum. As described in chapter 2, section “2.3.2. How to teach students with a visual impairment: strategies” and section “2.3.3. What to teach to students with a visual impairment”, McLinden & Douglas (2013, 2014) stressed that students with a visual impairment need either “access to learn” or need to “learn to access” skills to enable them to study the curriculum. Nevertheless, the analysis suggests that the existing Turkish education system fails in providing both by not offering ECC training and by not offering appropriate modifications.

However, although little or no training was delivered in ECC at schools for the blind, it was reported that some classes were sacrificed to teach ECC components by teachers with a special interest; the courses mentioned in this context were physical education, music and drawing. This finding mirrors that as published in mainstream literature, whereby it is indicated that students with a visual impairment are taught components of ECC within non-ECC allocated classes (e.g. Bishop, 2004; Lewis et al., 2014; Olmstead 2005). Even though this approach helps to manage a high number of students on itinerant TSVIs’ caseloads more effectively at mainstream schools, it is unacceptable that even at schools for the blind students have to miss lessons for the national curriculum so that they can receive little training on ECC.

In summary, the data analysis presented in this section suggests that the existing services do not pay much attention to ECC, and that an appropriate balance between academic subjects and the ECC is not achieved, even at schools for the blind. The instruction/practice of schools for the blind, mainstream schools and PSECs largely focussed on academic skills, to the exclusion of developing other crucial human capacities provided by the ECC. Moreover, it seems that even the national curriculum was not taught in a manner in which all students could have full access. Participants were therefore concerned that some people with a visual impairment may not be able to become fully independent individuals even if they were well prepared academically (which in itself was unlikely due to poor access to the whole curriculum).

6.3 Consequences of the experienced balance of curriculum content

Participants reported several negative consequences of not receiving an appropriate ECC training on lives of individuals with visual impairments. Here I will discuss the findings from both Study 1 and Study 2 related to the second research question: “What are the direct and indirect consequences of the experienced curriculum balance on lives of individuals with a visual impairment?”

6.3.1 Developmental implications

Seven of the educators stated that the lack of training in ECC in the early years may cause a delay in different developmental areas; they explicitly mentioned: intellectual development; communication and general knowledge; psycho-motor development (movement skills); and social development. These findings are in line with mainstream literature where authors claim that individuals with visual impairments tend to have fewer and distorted educational and everyday experiences which lead to them missing concepts and knowledge (e.g. Allman & Lewis, 2014; Bishop, 2004; Hatlen, 1996; Lewis & Allman, 2014; Lewis et al., 2014; Lieberman et al., 2014a).

Furthermore, three of the educators (Zehra, Meral and Fahriye) argued that as a consequence of a lack of movement and interaction with the social environment (isolation), students appear to develop stereotyped behaviours. They considered these to be inappropriate, odd, and with no social function. Therefore, they thought that such behaviours should be eliminated as they would prevent the social acceptance of an individual with visual impairment. Although a number of authors support this view (e.g. Durand & Carr, 1987; Sacks & Reardon, 1988; Sacks, & Wolffe 2006), it appears that the reasons for developing stereotypical behaviours and their effects on the lives of individuals with visual impairments has not been proven by systematic research findings (see: McHugh & Lieberman 2003). Most of the literature that is in line with the educators’ views is commentary text. Moreover, in contrast to educators, some authors consider stereotypical behaviours (e.g. rocking) to be a part of normal development (McHugh & Lieberman 2003); and in fact, they are adaptive because they help under-stimulated children to maintain optimal stimulation (Keil, Miller, & Cobb, 2006; Gal et al., 2009). Based on these mixed views, in contrast to the educators’ claims, I advocate that each individual should be considered separately and if stereotypical behaviours are serving a positive purpose they should be allowed to continue. However,

none of the participants shared this view. This indicates that educators may require training regarding the characteristics of stereotypical behaviours and their students. In short, the results of this study and the literature (as summarised in the *Literature Review* chapter) points to some issues in teacher preparation and in-service training of educators in Turkey. This will be discussed in more detail in section “6.5.2.The educators".

6.3.2 Unpleasant schooling experiences

Another significant consequence of the experienced curriculum balance was negative schooling experiences. No participant with a visual impairment had an overall positive experience of school. As a whole they hated their school years and did not want to go back. Nevertheless, they felt that sharing their experiences may contribute to a positive change in the lives of younger individuals in a similar situation (e.g. Dickson-Swift et al., 2006; Johnson & Macleod-Clarke, 2003; Johnson, 2009) and continued to share their narratives with me despite their discomfort.

Although there were differences in the detail of their experiences, it was often the practices reported in the section 4.3 which were identified as being negative: e.g. poor/no accommodations to access the curriculum and enhance their learning, negative attitudes of teachers, and being excluded from many learning and social activities. A consequence of these factors was isolation. As stated in chapter 4 and 5, some students never left their chairs or classrooms due to a lack of independent movement skills. In addition, some of them were bullied on some occasions by their peers and received inappropriate reactions and comments from teachers, who criticised them harshly and did not demonstrate any understanding of their visual impairment. Overall, these findings show similarities with the findings of Worth (2013), who investigated the schooling experiences of students with visual impairments in the UK and found that they did not feel that they belonged to their schools and had negative experiences regarding friendships and learning.

Furthermore, studies conducted with educators who work in mainstream schools in Turkey demonstrated their negative attitudes towards children with special needs and suggested that teachers did not want to have them in their classrooms. For instance, eight of the ten educators who participated in Gök & Erbaş’s (2011) study indicated that they did not want to teach a student with visual impairment. After those who are severely learning disabled, students with visual impairments were the least desired students in their classrooms. These findings illustrate why individuals with visual impairments did not like school.

An alternative view of unpleasant schooling experiences is that young adults with visual impairments may have experienced difficult and hard times in other areas of their lives directly unrelated to their education and preparedness (e.g. social acceptance, financial challenges) and projected their frustrations, anger, challenges and dissatisfaction on to their schooling experiences. Overall, this projection might be an indicator of how these people feel let down by society as a whole, since a country's education system is usually a reflection of a society's values and cultural norms (Durkheim, 1897, 1951). This matter is discussed in more detail in section "6.6.2.5. Society and culture" towards the end of this chapter.

In short, due to missing ECC training and teachers' negative attitudes, students with visual impairments did not develop the necessary skills to socialise, self-advocate or access the entire curriculum. The interplay of these factors led to horrible schooling experiences and might have had a negative impact on their capacity to be open, interested and motivated to learning new skills.

6.3.3 Becoming dependent on others

One of the most emphasised consequences of the experienced curriculum balance was "becoming dependent on others". All participants from Study 1 stated either that they are, or were, dependent on others due to not receiving proper training on ECC. Most educators also shared their concerns about students becoming dependent on others without ECC training. This finding supported past research (e.g. Giangreco et al., 1997; Bishop et al., 2005; Celeste, 2006; Özaydın et al., 2008). Similarly, the majority of educators stated that as a negative consequence of poor ECC training, individuals with visual impairments would have to rely on others to maintain their lives – this is also in line with current literature (Allman & Lewis, 2014; Hatlen, 1996; Lewis et al., 2014; Sapp & Hatlen 2010).

Being dependent on others has broader implications and causes individuals with visual impairments to experience challenges in different domains of their lives. One of the most interesting findings is that although ten out of twelve participants were employed, some (especially females with total blindness) still had to rely on someone from their family to transport them from home to their place of employment. Bengisu et al., (2008) surveyed 198 individuals with visual impairments (144 employed, 54 unemployed) regarding employment-related challenges experienced in Turkey and they concluded that 78% of the employed participants needed help from people around, a figure in-line with the findings of this

research. Bengisu et al.'s findings also highlighted that individuals with visual impairments not only needed help to get to work but that they also needed extensive and consistent help in their workplace, including getting lunch or going to the toilet etc.

The most striking result in this theme is that according to educators due to a lack of independence some people with visual impairments often preferred having a sighted partner. This means that since they cannot meet their own needs they prefer to get married to a sighted individual so that their sighted partner can meet their needs instead. In other words, a lack of independence may even influence people's choice of partner; they may end up getting married to someone who can meet their needs and compensate for their visual impairment rather than getting married to someone whom they love and are loved by in return.

6.3.4 Isolation

Isolation was another one of the most frequently mentioned issues in both studies. Not receiving proper training in ECC (e.g. social skills) to maintain friendships and not being able to travel independently led people with visual impairment to feel isolated. Isolation was not something that developed in the later stages of their lives; instead it was experienced from early years, for example by not being able to leave their classrooms or socialise with their peers during playtime at school. It is also known that individuals with visual impairment spend more time alone in their homes watching TV and listening to radios rather than interacting with their peers (Brian & Haegele, 2014; Conroy, 2012, 2014; Haegele et al., 2014; Holbrook, Caputo, Perry, Fuller, & Morgan, 2009; Lieberman et al., 2014b; Lohmeier, 2005; Sacks & Wolffe, 2006; Wolffe & Sacks, 1997).

As it was illustrated in section "5.3.5. Isolation, exclusion and issues in friendship(s)" Berrin and Melek indicated that individuals with visual impairments were often not chosen to be friends or were chosen to be friends only by students who were themselves not desired as friends by their peers. Similar results were also found by Göl (2014) and Ozaydin (2015) in Turkey and by Worth (2013) in the UK. Therefore, they ended up spending time with other students with visual impairments (Göl, 2014) or with students who were considered undesirable (Worth 2013) or they interact with adults rather than peers (Ozaydin 2015). What is interesting is that two of the TSVIs mentioned children and youths with visual impairment may have several people around them assisting but not willing to be friends. Indeed, Melek, the itinerant TSVI, claimed that sighted students were taught and encouraged to help their

friends with visual impairments but were not encouraged to be friends with them. This illustrates social barriers in participation. This seemed to contribute to the isolation of students from early years in their schools and explains how students with visual impairments can, and do, end up sitting alone in their chairs and not going out of their classrooms (see section “5.3.2. Limited movement”).

It is also important to note that individuals who were totally blind experienced isolation more frequently than individuals with some useful vision because without O&M instruction, any remaining vision is an advantage for travelling and for joining activities (see sections “4.6.2.1. Any remaining useful vision” and “5.6.1.1 Remaining useful vision”). Whilst individuals with some useful vision could use that sight to get around, individuals without useful vision (and independence skills) have to rely on others. Participants who are totally blind stated that they could not attend many social gatherings and felt isolated in the later stages of their lives because of not having independent travelling abilities and not wanting to make others deal with their transportation issues. As summarised in the Literature review, under section “2.9.2. Cultural differences and the concept(s) of the ECC”, this has a close correlation with the uniqueness of Turkish culture, whereby participants’ actions are based on interdependence rather than independence (conceptualised by Kitayama & Markus (2000) as Asian ways of being.) Since individuals could not travel independently and could not ask for help – because they prioritised the feelings of other people over their own – they elected to stay in and become isolated. It also ought to be noted that even if some people with visual impairments managed to seek help they might still be unable to find any support for transporting them to desired locations. Transportation issues for individuals with visual impairments were also identified as a challenge by other authors/researchers (e.g. Corn, Erin, & Lewis, 2003; Crudden & McBroom, 1999; McDonnell, 2010; Rosenblum & Corn, 2002).

The link between social skills, leisure and recreational skills, and the quality of life for individuals with visual impairments is well documented (e.g. Arndt et al., 2014; Brian & Haegele, 2014; Haegele et al., 2014; Lieberman et al., 2014a; Lieberman et al., 2014b). Without these skills, it is not a surprise that people with visual impairments experience isolation. For instance, if they do not have leisure and recreational skills they may not know what kind of activities they could be involved with and how they could modify activities to spend time with their sighted and non-sighted peers. Therefore, not knowing all areas of the ECC is likely to magnify the experienced isolation by individuals with visual impairments.

6.3.5 Psychological and emotional challenges

On top of isolation, experienced psychological and emotional challenges were reported by both educators and individuals with visual impairments on several occasions. This was anticipated to happen by Blasch et al., (1997), Sacks & Wolffe (2006), and Wiener et al., (2010) when the students do not receive proper training on the ECC components. Sacks & Wolffe (2006) cited social competence as being critical for success in the community. Similarly, more than half of the participants from Study 2 stated that a lack of training on ECC, a lack of support and having to remain dependent on others can cause people with visual impairments to be dissatisfied with life and become unhappy and withdrawn. These findings concur with the literature, whereby the sources of psychological distress of adolescents with visual impairment seem to result from difficulties in participating in activities charged with vision content a higher dependency on others, more family control, being discriminated against, and difficulties when mastering age-appropriate developmental tasks (Huurre & Aro, 2000; Lifshitz, Hen & Weisse, 2007; Pinquart, & Pfeiffer, 2012). Moreover, it is suggested that having a visual impairment might lead to higher levels of substance abuse (Pinquart & Pfeiffer, 2010); including misuse of alcohol to cope with their frustrations and low self-esteem (Koch, Nelipovich & Sneed, 2002). The attitudes of participants in this study confirm these findings and submit that the education system is responsible for the challenges they faced: a) they mentioned that they faced psychological challenges due to unpleasant schooling experiences; and b) face psychological challenges due to missing the necessary skills, and as a consequence of this they are not able to be independent and participate in everyday life.

With regard to facing psychological challenges, totally blind individuals and females spoke more negatively than their partially-sighted male peers. This supports the findings of previous studies (Hinds, Sincleir, Park, Suttie, Paterson & Macdonald, 2003; Pinquart & Pfeiffer, 2012; Shaw et al., 2007). An explanation for this may be that given the lack of ECC instruction, individuals with low vision can participate in some activities given that they have some useful vision, which is not available for individuals without any sight. Therefore, individuals with total blindness are likely to face more psychological issues (see section “2.1.3 what is visual impairment” for a definition of these terms).

Likewise, female participants with severe visual impairment were the least independent and spoke about psychological challenges the most frequently. As mentioned in the literature review, section “2.9.2. Turkish culture and the ECC”, females in Turkey are more protected

and limited than males. Similarly, due to worries regarding safety, Rosenblum & Corn (2002) and Rosenblum (2001) found that females with visual impairment travelled independently less frequently than male participants and because of this faced more emotional issues (Pinquart & Pfeiffer, 2012).

A current report released by the statistical bureau of Turkey (TUIK 2015) illustrates that the employment rate and access rate to education overall is much lower for people with a disability. The same report, which covers all domains of employment and access to education, notes that females were severely disadvantaged in comparison to their male counterparts. For example, 23.3% of people with a disability are illiterate and 10.9% of them are males whilst 32.3% are female. For the entire population this rate is 4.5% – 1.4% for males and 7.6% for females. Only 4%, males and 1.5% of females with a disability are higher education graduates whereas without a disability this is 12.1% for males and 8.5% for females. Other research findings illustrate a similar disadvantage for females concerning access to employment and education (e.g. Bell & Mino, 2013; Bengisu et al., 2008; La Grow, 2004; Lee & Park, 2008; McDonnell, 2010). Moreover, Bell & Mino (2013) also found that males with visual impairment earn more than their female counterparts. There is no doubt at all that these disadvantages create more difficulties for totally blind females and push them to experience psychological challenges. Gender issues will be discussed in more detail in a later part of this chapter, section “6.6.2.5. Society and culture”.

6.3.6 Individual confidence

An interesting result of this study was the lack of self-acceptance among young adults with a visual impairment. More than half of the participants made it clear that they were not confident with their visual impairment. Some participants (Barbaros, Derya and Nuray) tried to hide their impairment and not use aids that would allow them to be independent (e.g. cane, magnifier) in order to avoid being identified as disabled. They sometimes even faked having vision (e.g. Derya) by staring at a book page and pretending to read so as to avoid being identified as someone with visual impairment (see chapter 4, section “4.3.5. Denying disability and not using the necessary aids”). Participants often stated that they did not feel comfortable disclosing information about their impairment, which is a crucial need for self-advocacy. Moreover, as illustrated in chapter 4, section “4.3.6. Low self-esteem and self-advocacy”, ten of the participants were not comfortable advocating for necessary services and accommodations. This has a very close affiliation with self-acceptance, an area of self-determination and part of the ECC (Arndt et al., 2014; Lieberman, Robinson & Rollheiser,

2006; Shapiro, Moffett, Lieberman & Dummer, 2005). In my opinion, in order for people with visual impairment to have the necessary adjustments they need to be confident in disclosing their abilities and be able to advocate when it is necessary.

Additionally, it is important to note that generally pupils with visual impairments do not like to appear different than their typically-developing peers. This also may contribute to them not accepting their visual impairment. Moreover, as mentioned in chapter 4 and 5, since using a cane was banned at schools for the blind (see section “4.2.1. The ECC and schools for the blind” and section “4.6.3.2. School environment”), the attitudes of educators will have contributed to non-acceptance (by others) and then be internalised by those with a visual impairment. This will have contributed to negative feelings and made it more difficult for individuals to accept their impairment.

From a similar point of view, the participants also stated that they did not feel comfortable asking for help. Although not asking might seem a step towards independence, I consider asking to be crucial in being independent because every day people with or without a disability need the help of others, and lacking such skills may put them in danger. In other words, individuals with visual impairments should be able to use others’ help when they need it as a tool to being independent. In short due to a lack of appropriate education, individuals with visual impairments face challenges in accepting their visual impairment, self-advocating and asking for help when they are in need.

6.3.7 Health and safety

The educators stated that due to a lack of training in O&M and the ban on using canes some students with visual impairments travel around without using any O&M aids or any protection techniques (see section “5.3.3. Travelling without a mobility aid and injuries”). A current study by Altunay-Arslantekin (2015) confirms this finding. In her study of 87 students with visual impairments attending two schools for the blind in Ankara, it was found that none knew basic O&M techniques. Although this lack, combined with a subsequent lack of safe independent travelling abilities, led them into dangerous situations such as bumping into walls, windows, and car accidents, very few teachers saw this as problematic. Rather, educators were almost proud of the fact that students could travel without any aid (see section “5.3.3 Travelling without a mobility aid and injuries” and “5.5.2.2 Lower expectations of educators”). However, the young adults with visual impairment themselves complained frequently about having negative experiences due to missing skills.

Overall, eleven of the participants with visual impairment expressed feeling “fear”, which hindered their independence. Mainly they reported “fear” of “making mistakes”, and as a consequence of the mistakes, “hurting themselves”. The most significant example was given by Ismail, a participant with low vision who had had a serious car accident which left him in intensive care for a fortnight.

The most interesting thing revealed in this theme was that all the participants who reported that they were afraid of hurting themselves were female. Even though some males reported that they were afraid of making mistakes they did not report that they feared hurting themselves. A reason for this might could be that girls conduct more household duties which involve using knives, or, as discussed earlier, it may be due to the over-protection of girls in Turkish society, a fear imposed by parents; or boys might find more opportunities to practice and enhance their independence skills and therefore may not fear as much. If a person is not well-trained a natural consequence is facing negative experiences and these experiences will cause fear to develop.

6.3.8 Academic achievement

As discussed in section “6.2.4 Academic curriculum”, due to a shortage of education in ECC components and a lack of accommodations, individuals with visual impairments not only faced challenges in their everyday life but also in their academic life. Participants especially reported facing challenges in accessing subjects which require more visual input (e.g. maths, English and science). They were neither given required materials in their preferred format nor were they taught access skills to learn independently. The literature supports this (see Bayram et al., 2015; Ünlü et al., 2010). Because of these access issues, subject omissions take place due to poor resources and/or the bias of educators at segregated schools. Moreover, teachers decide not to teach subjects that they find difficult to adapt at schools for the blind, and instruction is not offered within an accessible fashion at mainstream schools. These access issues influence the overall academic achievement of students with visual impairment and are likely to decrease the rate of university entries.

Indeed (as mentioned above), according to TUIK (2015), only 4% of males and 1.5% of females with a disability graduate from a higher education institution, whereby in the entire population of Turkey these figures are 12.1% for males and 8.5% for females. A figure specific to people with visual impairments could not be accessed. Nevertheless, as can be seen from the TUIK (2015)’s percentages, when it comes to people with a disability, the

inequality in graduating from higher educational institutions is significantly lower than people without a disability. Likewise, females with a disability are at a disadvantaged position in comparison to their male counterparts. Other studies (e.g. Çakıroğlu & Melekoğlu, 2014; MEB, 2015a), confirm this inequality.

As illustrated in chapter 4, section "4.3.4. Challenges in accessing the academic curriculum and lower achievement", ten of the twelve individuals with visual impairments reported a lack of satisfaction with their achievements because they thought they could have been more successful and ended up in better places if they had been offered the necessary instruction in an accessible manner, e.g. by having the materials and being taught how to use them. Similarly, there are a number of studies illustrating difficulties in accessing to employment for individuals with visual impairments (see Balta & Bengisu 2012; Bengisu & Balta, 2011; Çelik, 2013; McDonnell, 2010; McDonnall & Crudden, 2009; McDonnall, 2013; McDonnall, 2014; McDonnall, Crudden, & O'Mally 2015; McDonough, Stiken & Haack, 2006; Öztürk, 2011; Wolffe & Kelly, 2011; Wolffe, Ajuwon, & Kelly, 2013). Therefore, a lack of ECC training seems to hinder academic achievements as well as finding and maintaining employment for individuals with visual impairments.

In short, students with visual impairments seem to miss a significant amount of learning experiences both in the ECC and the national curriculum, even when taught at schools for the blind. Since academic attainment (high grades and high scores in national tests) is crucial in pursuing a university degree and finding a job, individuals with visual impairments (especially females) may end up significantly disadvantaged.

6.3.9 Bias towards people with visual impairments

As discussed above, the consequences of the experienced curriculum balance content for students with visual impairments influences their personal development and everyday life significantly. However, a poor experience has a negative influence in other ways, specifically by contributing to the broader society's negative bias towards people with a visual impairment. As Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological model (2005) describes, the child is surrounded by concentric layers of the environment and there is a continuous two-way interaction between these layers (see section "4.6.1. The Bio-ecological model of human development").

It is widely written that despite the high educational attainment of individuals with visual impairments (in developed countries), employment rates for this population remain low (see: Bell & Mino, 2013; Erickson, Lee & von Schrader, 2012; McDonnell, 2010; McDonnall, Crudden, & O'Mally, 2015; Ravenscroft, 2013; Test et al., 2009) mainly due to employer bias, (see Benoit, Jansson, Jansenberger & Phillips 2013; Crudden & McBroom, 1997; Golub, 2006; Jasper & Waldhart, 2013; Luecking, 2003; McDonnall, 2014; McDonnall et al., 2014; McDonnall, Crudden, & O'Mally, 2015). Despite there being no figures for the employment rate of individuals with a visual impairment, the overall employment rate of people with a disability in Turkey is estimated to be around 22.2% (TUIK, 2015). In contrast to this, the participants of this study had a high employment rate. Including teachers from Study 2, thirteen of the fifteen participants were employed and two of the students who were not looking for a job found employment after graduation. Although the sample size was small and a sample bias might exist, it did seem that participants of this study did not face great challenges in finding employment. This may have been, in part, due to the disability quota. This came into being in 2005 after the passing of the Disability Act (Bengisu, et al., 2008; Koşaner, 2007), and requires all companies with 50 or more employees to hire a certain number of employees with a disability (Abdullah & Mansor, 2012).

Despite this, six educators reported that a lack of social skills, the inability to independently travel and lack of self-confidence leads to people with visual impairments facing challenges in finding employment. It is likely that educators are referring to employment beyond the disability quota. In other words, if companies do not have to hire people with a disability due to a mandate, individuals with visual impairments would struggle to meet the eligibility criteria and are therefore not likely to be employed due to their missing skills (as well as bias and other environmental factors).

Other issues were also raised, some participants indicated that although they are employed they face challenges in being promoted and are asked to work in positions for which they are over-qualified. In line with this, Bengisu et al., (2008) found that 38% of 144 individuals with visual impairments in Turkey worked as switch board operators, despite being over-qualified. 29% of the switch board operators had a university/college degree and stated that they accepted this job due to not having any other option.

Moreover, some participants (e.g. Gulsum and Can) were not offered the opportunity to perform certain tasks in their job roles and were asked instead to sit passively. This signals

that they were may be hired only because of the disability quota and raises the issue of why and how the government and private companies are hiring people with disabilities: they may be hiring employees who are not meeting the job requirements solely in order to meet the State mandate and avoid associated fines. Within both Bengisu et al.'s (2008) and Lee & Park's (2008) studies the majority of the employees with visual impairment were hired by public companies and private companies due to the disability quota; very rarely were companies willing to hire employees with visual impairment voluntarily. Mandating companies to hire disabled individuals without the necessary skills may do more harm than good for disabled individuals because this is likely to re-create and reinforce peoples' negative bias regarding the abilities of people with a disability. If individuals with visual impairments are well prepared and offered the necessary accommodations and support they can perform many jobs successfully. But if employers have to employ individuals who are not able to perform jobs at a satisfactory level, employers and colleagues are likely to develop bias and hesitate to hire and work with capable individuals with visual impairments in the future. These consequences may form a vicious cycle for both the employee with visual impairment and the employer.

In line with the general view that employers usually have negative attitudes toward hiring individuals with visual impairments and are therefore not willing to do so, Zehra, a TSVI who was the deputy head of a school for the blind, did not want to employ teachers with visual impairment at her school. This was despite her supposed understanding of individuals with visual impairments and her assumed experience of what they can do. This highlights a dilemma because Zehra, as an educator and a deputy head teacher at a school for the blind, has a crucial role in preparing individuals with visual impairments for life (including employment), yet her attitude demonstrates her lack of expectation of such individuals. This, in turn, is likely to influence her teaching and preparing such students for life. She clearly stated that she did not want to hire someone who may have been prepared (taught) at her school, and more particularly by her. This could be interpreted as meaning she is not satisfied with the training the institution delivers and does not demonstrate any attempt to improve that training. This confirms earlier findings regarding hiring individuals with a disability beyond the disability quota. In addition, it raises the concern that if an educator who is qualified in visual impairment and has experience of working with people with visual impairments does not want to hire someone with a visual impairment, how will other people, especially employers with limited knowledge and experience work with people with visual impairments and treat job seekers with a visual impairment?

It is also important to state that in order to prevent bias towards hiring people with visual impairments and/or hidden unemployment among already hired individuals with a visual impairment, i) they should be equipped with necessary skills, and ii) the environment should be designed to meet their individual needs. It is not enough to only offer the necessary skills in ECC (and for transition) but individuals should also be offered the necessary adjustments and modifications at their place of employment (e.g. access to assistive technology). They should not be unable to perform their roles due to individual and environmental barriers. Reducing such barriers would help to prevent employers and other people in society developing bias. Indeed, two educators stated that they believe that changing the negative impression of people with visual impairments is possible by preparing them as independent individuals who can live fulfilling lives and act as role models for society. This not only suggests that they believe in the power of education in leading change in society but also that they believe in the effectiveness of the ECC in promoting the independence of individuals with a visual impairment.

6.4 The 'ideal' balance of curriculum

This section discusses the findings from both Study 1 and Study 2 regarding the 'ideal' curriculum balance which should be available for students with visual impairments.

It is important to note that all participants commented on a positive relationship between the ECC and independence and preparedness for adult life. Participants with a visual impairment repeatedly stated that their education mainly focused on academic skills and either very little or no attention was paid to the skills within the ECC. Therefore, when asked about an ideal curriculum balance all of them advised that more time should be spent teaching ECC skills to students with a visual impairment. Educators also did not think that the currently experienced curriculum content was sufficient to allow students with visual impairments to become fully independent and advised that more time should be spent teaching ECC skills to students with visual impairments. This view for improved ECC education is also supported in the literature (e.g. Agran et al., 2007; Douglas & Hewett, 2014; Lewis et al., 2014; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010; Wolffe et al., 2002; Wolffe & Kelly, 2011; Zhou et al., 2011).

Moreover, although participants asked for more training on the ECC to be delivered so as to fully prepare them as individuals capable of meeting their own needs, some of the young adults with visual impairments and educators went further. Six individuals with visual impairments and three educators indicated that instruction on the ECC components must be

prioritised *over* the academic curriculum so that students could be better prepared for life. A similar view was also expressed in earlier research (e.g. Brown & Beamish, 2012; Lewis et al., 2014; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Morris & Sharma, 2011; Palmer, 2005; Sapp & Hatlen, 2007, 2010). However, it should be noted, in comparison to the studies mentioned here, more respondents in this study recommended prioritising the ECC over the academic curriculum. A reason for this could be that the participants in this study were more marginalised due to the extremely low level of ECC training (in comparison to the listed studies) and this may have led them to offering a radical reaction to their experience and situation. Considering that there was not much ECC education available for students with visual impairments there was not an existing 'balance' to discuss. Simply put, education focussed solely on academic training, and therefore the participants simply suggested that more ECC training should be included; a more sophisticated discussion of how this could be achieved was not forthcoming.

A key challenge facing educators and policy makers is knowing how to include the ECC and the academic curriculum "given the time constraints of the school day" (Wolffe & Kelly, 2011, p. 341). Douglas & Hewett (2014) note that "embedding an appropriate ECC within young people's educational experience is critical" (p.94), but go on to note that "educational systems which emphasise national assessments for the purposes of accountability [...] are in danger of narrowing the curriculum at the expense of disability-specific curriculum areas" (p.96), and therefore making this balance even more difficult for educators to achieve. This suggests creative and imaginative thinking is required by educators in order to find a practical and positive curriculum balance for children and young people with visual impairments.

What concerns me is that the educators in this study did not come up with creative solutions (or any solutions) that could be implemented without a major reduction to the amount of academic curriculum delivered, and not embedded in school. For example, according to Cansu, a TSVI with a visual impairment, there should be a big independent living training centre, similar to the National Federation of the Blind independent living centre in the USA, and individuals with visual impairments should receive training in this centre (see section "5.4 The 'ideal' balance of curriculum"). Although Cansu's view is interesting, the proposal is rather 'rehabilitation' in style with interventions focussed upon older children as they reach the end of their formal education. Therefore, it might prove problematic because people with visual impairments would not receive such ECC training in their early years. As presented

previously, a lack of early-years training can also cause significant problems in the development of the child and lead to psychological challenges which will affect them for the rest of their lives. Moreover, there are already two such adult rehabilitation centres in Turkey which offer training for people with a visual impairment aged eighteen or older (see Çitil, 2007). However, these centres cannot meet all the needs of people with visual impairments and since they only accept trainees who are 18+ this model is not sufficient by itself for preparing independent individuals.

Likewise, Zehra's ideas regarding how the ECC should be delivered are also interesting. Instead of delivering independence training in a real-life setting such as on a real-life street, she suggested creating an artificial setting (see section "5.4. The "ideal" balance of curriculum"). This view is problematic; both because of the expense involved and because such an environment would be artificial and too far away from reality to effectively prepare individuals with visual impairments for real life. It might even be that such training would contribute to isolation rather than assist with integration and inclusion. Learning is an ongoing process; whilst people with visual impairments learn from society, society also learns from them.

In addition, none of the educators referred to teaching ECC skills whilst they were teaching academic skills or in a way without causing a major sacrifice to the delivery of academic subjects. In the USA teachers and other stakeholders of the education system are aware of how the ECC is important in preparing independent individuals with visual impairments (Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Nevertheless, similar issues regarding lack of creativity or knowing how best to teach the ECC are raised in research outside of Turkey as well (e.g. Agran et al., 2007; Blankenship, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a, 2008b (cited in Lohmeier et al. 2009); Sapp & Hatlen, 2007, 2010). Therefore, Lohmeier et al. (2009) point out that the field should develop strategies regarding how the ECC could be taught in the most sufficient and effective way in a typical school day without a major sacrifice in teaching academic skills.

While the data in this thesis did not offer much insight into addressing the dilemma of the curriculum balance, it is important to attempt to describe how a more balanced curriculum could be delivered within the Turkish education system based on existing conditions and policies without a major sacrifice in either the academic curriculum or the ECC. Based on my personal experience and reading, I will try illustrate how this might be possible.

6.4.1 An attempt to describe an 'ideal' curriculum balance

Drawing upon literature, what has been learned from the study, and my own experience, I attempt to describe how a balanced curriculum content could be delivered in the existing Turkish education system. Of key importance in constructing this ideal is drawing out the features of an education system that can offer the balance I have argued is important. In a recent analysis of how to implement the ECC in the US context, Allman & Lewis (2014) draw out some helpful principles. Firstly, the edited volume highlights the range of people involved in the broad education system supporting the child's development – the parent, the classroom teacher and the specialist professionals (the TSVI and O&M specialist in particular). Secondly, they highlight the importance of a consistency of approach which has its "beginning with the end in mind" and "focussing upon the potential adult" (p.4). Importantly then, is that the ECC is not something which is introduced in later adult years, but is something which should run through a child's educational career. Thirdly, they highlight the importance of a range of instructional strategies which should be adopted by the TSVI. As well as "direct instruction" (p.28) of children and young people by the specialist, they note the importance of "providing information" and "collaboration" (p.27).

Building upon Allman and Lewis's (2014) recent work, the following eight features of an educational system are identified, and in the following sections I expand upon them and illustrate how this could be implemented in Turkey.

1. Early intervention
2. Long term and consistent educational interventions
3. Knowledgeable specialist professionals
4. Direct instruction by specialists
5. Practice and consistent reinforcing of instruction
6. Cross-curricula working
7. Inclusive schools and environments
8. Educational policies and resourcing

Again, these strategies are very relevant to Bronfenbrenner's framework: the strategies and educational approaches and interventions change over time (the chronosystem), involve adjusting the child's immediate environment, including direct instruction (the microsystem), involve planning and awareness training across a range of people (the mesosystem), and the

broader services and policies which enable this to happen (the exosystem and macrosystem).

Below, as I explained these strategies, I tried to address how I would acknowledge and exercise strategies that amalgamate both the ECC and Bronfenbrenner's Bio-Ecological Model of Human Development theory, e.g. whilst focusing on the stages of education I will also give examples regarding the development of a child at home, outside and in social contexts. It is important to stress that this is an attempt to demonstrate options rather than being a definitive prescription of strategies. In addition, since I support inclusive provision as much as possible, I will attempt to illustrate how the ECC could be taught and included within the existing mainstream school system in Turkey. Finally, I will conclude this section by describing how this balance could be accessed at a school for the blind as well.

6.4.1.1 Early Intervention

The main purpose of early intervention is for professionals to help parents and families care for and support the development of their young children. This includes modelling high expectations and ambitions for the development of visually impaired children, including the potential to be independent. Allman & Lewis (2014) conceptualise this as having the "beginning with the end in mind" and they suggest "focussing upon the potential adult" from day one.

As Allman & Lewis (2014) pointed out, many parents hope that their children will grow up and have a regular life which might include attending a university, finding a job, getting married and establishing their own family. Nevertheless, in a sighted world, for a person with visual impairments to achieve these goals the ECC intervention should start from very early years. Allman & Lewis (2014, p.16-18) indicate that the ECC has relevance from birth, and they provide the following experiences as examples which children from birth to age of three should experience:

- eating textured and solid foods as developmentally appropriate
- eating with fingers and then a spoon
- exploring familiar settings around the home and yard or neighbourhood
- rolling, crawling, and walking as developmentally appropriate
- experiencing hand and finger play
- discovering different textures to touch and taste
- searching for objects of interest
- being read to while playing with objects related to a story
- caring for or developing empathy for pets as living creatures

- experiencing family and community events
- using different types of transportation
- being exposed to multiple family members and friends
- being encouraged to be independent
- being praised realistically for accomplishments
- helping with bath time and teeth brushing
- sleeping alone

According to Lewis & Allman (2014, p.8) “young children who are exposed to a variety of early experiences that are accompanied by meaningful verbal explanations of the people, objects, and interactions in the world around them, develop an essential foundation for learning to get along with others, develop a personal point of view, explore, and begin to read and communicate”. They even go on further to express that such experiences make the child ready for school and to be a happy adult. Basically, early intervention services for children with visual impairments should be offered for all families and should especially focus on O&M, play skills, and daily living skills (Kesiktaş, 2009).

According to the Turkish Special Education Services Regulation (2012), early intervention services should be provided for children with a disability between the ages of 0 and 36 months, both at home and at institutions, by focussing on informing and supporting the family (Diken et al., 2012). The essential members of such an early intervention team are hospitals, families, paediatricians or primary health care professionals, neurologists, physiotherapists, social workers (Badr et al., 2006; Bayhan & Sipal, 2011), as well as TSVIs, O&M specialists and other early intervention professionals. According to Diken et al. (2012, p.348), the early intervention “team implements a family orientation program about the causes of disability, how to deal with the disability, how to overcome the difficulties associated with the disability, and the educational opportunities that are available to families that have children with disabilities”.

Drawing upon specially developed resources, checklists and guidelines (e.g. The Oregon Project, or the Developmental Journal for babies and children with visual impairment), professionals should continuously provide resources and strategies to parents to encourage their child’s development, as well as model these techniques on an ongoing basis. Not only will this maximise the child’s chances of meeting his/her developmental milestones (e.g. reaching, attending, supporting his head, crawling, standing, babbling, first words), but it will also raise parents’ expectations about what is possible and develop their understanding of how stimulation of, and interaction with, children who are blind is achieved.

In light of this, in Turkey, ECC instruction must start from early years through early intervention services. Indeed, Turkey seemed to already have a place for the delivery of early intervention services in its legislation and policies. For example, the Turkish Disability Act (2005) and the Turkish Special Education Services Regulation (2012) covers the early intervention services with in-depth detail. Yet, "it cannot be assumed that early intervention services are well organized, that support and guidance teams are well established, or that evaluation and monitoring processes are provided…" (Bayhan & Sipal, 2011, p.874) Moreover, Diken et al., (2012) stress the ignorance of people in relation to early intervention services in Turkey. Therefore, they suggest that social awareness should be created about early intervention services and "their benefits, effects, and results" (p.351). In addition, a qualified system of early intervention services should immediately be created (Diken et al. 2012, p.351).

On the other hand, Kesiktaş (2009) identified a number of studies illustrating a significant relationship between parental involvement and expectations and the development of their children with a visual impairment (e.g. Baird & Mayfield, 1997; Craig, 1996; Dote-Kwan, 1995; Jacob, 2005, Loots et al., 2003; Recchia, 1998). Therefore, a well-structured early intervention services model should be established by improving the existing model and all parents who have a child with a visual impairment should be served across the country, including rural areas to build higher expectations and promote independence of children with visual impairments.

6.4.1.2 Long term and consistent educational interventions

Educational interventions throughout a young person's education should have a consistent ambition which seeks to promote the development of an individual's agency and independence as part of an inclusive society. Therefore, the collaboration of professionals and parents is not only important at the current point in a child's education but it is also essential going forward as people and in creating change.

One of the crucial roles of a TSVI is to explain the value of the ECC to head teachers, general education teachers, parents, and other school staff who may not understand the need for time and resources to be spent on the ECC (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). According to Sapp & Hatlen (2010, p.344), "For ECC instruction to be most effective, these teachers need to have administrative backing, the entire educational team needs to reinforce the skills being

taught, and the family needs to support the instruction that is provided". If the TSVI can communicate how the ECC is important for students with visual impairments these "professionals and families can work as a cohesive team providing adequate instruction and practice in the areas of the ECC" (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.344).

First, this involves effective communication between different professionals and institutions that the student is served by. This is associated with people who are located in Bronfenbrenner's (2005) mesosystem. As mentioned earlier, in Turkey, a student who is attending a mainstream school is entitled to receive services from a PSEC, an itinerant TSVI as well other professionals. Yet, the findings showed that both school teachers and PSEC teachers were teaching the same subjects over and over (academic skills) and not teaching some skills at all (ECC) (see section "4.2 The experienced balance of curriculum content", "5.2 The experienced balance of curriculum content" and "6.2 The experienced curriculum balance"). Therefore, it is very important to establish coordination between all service providers. In order to establish such coordination one of the professionals should take responsibility to ensure all parties are on the same page regarding the education of the student.

For instance, when a child with a visual impairment started to go to primary mainstream school his TSVI should communicate with other people who are enrolled with his/her education so that they can deliver training and allow practice on learned skills consistently. So the TSVI would communicate with parents, the PSEC, the classroom teacher as well as other school staff to determine child's needs and goals for that academic year. This can be easily dealt with via the "Individualised Educational Plan" (IEP) process.

Starting from 1997, in the Turkish education system, an IEP is required for all students who are entitled to receive special education services (Kargin, 2007). However, it seems there is a big difference in how the IEPs are implemented in Turkey compared to other countries. For example, in the USA, the IEP is developed with the contribution of the classroom teacher, the specialist teacher, subject teachers, parents and other professionals along with the student himself. Moreover, IEPs can include not only academic skills but other crucial disability specific skills (Lohmeier, 2009). Nevertheless, in Turkey, there is no reference to disability specific skills and therefore IEPs focus solely on academic skills. Moreover, although the legislation and regulations stipulate that IEPs should be developed with special education teachers, the classroom teacher, subject teachers, the school psychologist, other school

staff, parents and the student (Kargin, 2007; Special Education Regulation, 2012), there are significant differences and inconsistencies in its implementation(s) (Bayhan & Sipal, 2011; Diken, et al., 2012; Kesiktaş, 2009). In current Turkish schools IEPs are produced by only the teacher of that particular class and parents, the student, the school psychologist, or other school staff not included. To be more explicit, in the primary school, the classroom teacher produces the IEP. Whereas in middle or secondary school, only the subject teachers who offer one-to-one instruction to students produce the IEP for those in their own class. Simply, although the IEP process is included and well described in Turkey's legislation and policies (Kargin, 2007), the IEP process seemed to be misinterpreted and legislation and policies are not fully implemented as originally intended.

For an effective ECC instruction, all professionals who are serving the student, parents and the student should take part and realistic goals should be established. Moreover, role descriptions should be made clear so that all members know what they are supposed to be doing. Developing proper IEPs and establishing an effective communication mechanism is essential for success. This includes meeting face-to-face and reviewing the process on a regular basis (e.g. once every three months) and anticipate increasing the effectiveness of the service(s) provided.

Not only for the current year, but for a longer time frame, there should be some communication mechanisms. When a student moves to another teacher there should be enough information for the new teacher to know what the student has been working on and what they will be working on. For instance, a TSVI should setup an IEP meeting with parents and all professionals serving the student. After the IEP is produced there will be some reviewing meetings. These meetings and communication between all IEP team members will be recorded. An IEP reviewing meeting should take place at the end of the academic year and a detailed report will be developed. These reports will also be used to craft a final transition report /portfolio when the child is ready to move on into his/her new school. Simply, there should some mechanism for both current education and future education of the child. These should be attached to the child and travel with him throughout his educational journey so that long term and consistent educational interventions could be delivered.

Nevertheless, in Turkey, "with respect to the transitions services, there is no legal regulation for children with disabilities to transfer smoothly either from home-based intervention to preschools or from preschools to elementary schools" (Diken et al., 2012, p.350). Therefore,

parents of children with SEN face a number of challenges during transition (Bakkaloglu, 2013); especially, “in finding schools, communicating with the receiver-and-giver institutions, cooperating with the professionals, and preparing their children for the next level of education during transition process” (Diken et al., 2012, p.350) these findings suggest that there is a need for changes in educational policies to establish effective transition services for students.

In short, for effective ECC instruction, long term and consistent educational interventions require, and should be built around, services which understand what each person is doing around the visually impaired child to ensure consistency. This involves a shared philosophy, but also requires appropriate record keeping for communication between people (the mesosystem) and time (the chronosystem).

6.4.1.3 Knowledgeable specialist professionals

TSVIs are “the key coordinators in the important enterprise of making their students' education a valuable experience” (Allman & Lewis, 2014, p.19). Therefore, in order to teach the ECC and establish a balanced curriculum content, TSVIs need to have a strong understanding of the ECC, the challenges of academic curriculum access and the balance between the two.

All teacher candidates who completed a degree or certification in visual impairments would be familiar with the ECC and able to name the nine areas of instruction (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Yet, TSVIs should have “a much higher level of proficiency in the ECC than a simple recitation of the areas” (Sapp & Hatlen 2010, p.343). They must acquire “a deep understanding of all the areas of the ECC, know methods for providing instruction in the ECC, and be able to implement strategies for incorporating the ECC into educational programming” (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.343). In addition to teaching and assessing, the TSVI should be able to incorporate the ECC in the IEPs and daily schedules of the students (Lieberman et al., 2014a; Sapp & Hatlen 2010; Lewis & Allman, 2014).

Nevertheless, commenting on the USA, Sapp & Hatlen, (2010) noted, “despite the consensus that the ECC is critical for the success of students with visual impairments while in school and after graduation, mounting evidence shows that teachers are not completing their professional preparation with adequate skills in teaching the ECC and are spending much of their time with students tutoring academics, rather than teaching the essential skills of the ECC” (p.343). Yet, knowing the ECC skills and having the abilities of how to teach

them are two very different things (Allman & Lewis, 2014; Lewis & Allman, 2014). Therefore the TSVI should know the ECC areas beyond their description, they should master the skills and strategies on how they can teach the ECC skills in complex and busy educational contexts. Allman & Lewis (2014, p.29) state that there are barriers to providing instruction in the ECC components, “all of which need to be addressed and met by teachers of students with visual impairments”. These challenges include:

- identifying what to teach
- coordinating efforts with parents and other school personnel
- having equipment and materials on site for effective instruction
- managing time needed to provide academic support and instruction in all the ECC areas
- convincing school administrators and others of the importance of the ECC
- maintaining students' interest in learning ECC-related skills
- providing practice needed for development and mastery of skills in the areas of the ECC (p.29)

Unsurprisingly, the above bullet points are closely related to the broad strategies I identify that are required to achieve a balanced curriculum. Of relevance here is to recognise that it is important to prepare qualified TSVIs with necessary skills and abilities so that they can face the challenges and deliver instruction in the ECC areas despite of all challenges to all students including the ones with multiple disabilities, blind and low vision, and ones from birth to the end of compulsory schooling. Yet, as illustrated in chapter 5, educators did not consider themselves to be equipped with all the necessary skills to teach the ECC. Furthermore, Altunay-Arslantekin (2015) stated that TSVIs who are considered to be dual qualified, both O&M specialist and TSVI, did not master O&M skills during their teacher preparation in Turkey. Moreover, as discussed earlier, in Turkey, TSVI standards were developed but these references did not cover majority of the ECC skills among the skills which TSVIs should be proficient in (see, Kesiktaş & Akcamete, 2011).

On the other hand, not only TSVIs but other specialists who could play a crucial role in teaching the ECC should be prepared and hired across the country. For instance, according to Diken et al. (2012, p.351) there is a serious shortage of professionals at every level of early intervention and early childhood education for students with visual impairments and “this limits services to be provided”. Especially, early intervention services “for children aged 0-3 cannot be offered at home (although the legislation specifies it) because of the lack of personnel to offer such services” (Diken et al., 2012, p.351). Moreover, “the requirements for children with special needs attending preschool institutions cannot be satisfied, as the

[general education] teachers have limited information and experience about the characteristics and requirements of young children with special needs" (p.351).

Therefore, Sapp & Hatlen (2010) suggest including areas of the ECC to be included into teacher preparation programmes as early as possible. Lieberman et al. (2014a) also recommend that ECC components be a part of education programs for other teachers; "If physical education professional preparation programs taught strategies for infusing the ECC components in classes, these future teachers may be more likely to include the components throughout their classes" (Lieberman et al., 2014a, p.246). When the TSVIs and O&M specialists collaborate with physical education and other teachers, these teachers could "be very successful in incorporating the ECC into everyday lessons and activities" (Lieberman, et al., 2014a, p.246)..

In Turkey first of all, TSVI standards should be modified and updated so that they accommodate all ECC relevant skills. In addition, the existing TSVI preparation programmes quality should be improved. Moreover, a number of necessary TSVI teacher preparation programmes should be established immediately and they should equip teachers with the necessary ECC skills so that these teachers could be hired and serve the students with visual impairment across the country. In addition, ECC relevant classes could be offered as optional classes for other teacher candidates (e.g. physical education teachers) so that they can be familiar with how to incorporate the ECC in their everyday teaching. Lastly, existing TSVIs and general education teachers should be offered effective in-service training regarding the ECC and how they can incorporate these skills into students' schedules and promote independence. These suggestions are intended to prepare knowledgeable professionals and this will assist in establishing an ideal curriculum balance for students with visual impairments.

6.4.1.4 Direct instruction by specialists

According to Lieberman et al. (2014a, 2014b) and Haegele et al. (2014) students with visual impairments are in need of more instruction and practice time than their sighted peers when they are learning new concepts and movements. This is due to "their lack of background knowledge in relation to the skills or concepts being taught" (Lieberman et al, 2014a, p.239). Indeed, "by definition, the ECC encompasses those behaviours and skills that students with unimpaired vision typically learn incidentally, without instruction, but for which students who are visually impaired often need direct intervention"(Allman & Lewis, 2014, p.28). Therefore,

some teaching of ECC skills may require individually-based teaching which is additional and extra because sighted students learn those skills through incidental learning. This additional learning might require withdrawal from the mainstream classroom because of time pressures and will often involve specialist teachers' / professionals' input. In addition, Sapp & Hatlen (2010, p.344) stated that for ECC skills to be mastered by students with visual impairments, they should be offered "pre-teaching", "teaching", and "re-teaching". Lieberman et al., (2014a) also found this teaching cycle to be crucially important in learning new skills and concepts. All these require the TSVI to be creative and use her/his time in the most efficient fashion. Although the utmost effort must be made to ensure that the student is not missing academic subjects, in some cases, the student might be pulled out from his or her classroom and offered one-to-one ECC training, or have additional lessons before or after school lessons or on holidays.

For example, let us imagine one of the students needs to learn cane techniques but his dual qualified TSVI's (in O&M and TSVI) daily schedule is quite full (which is often the case for itinerant teachers). In this case, the student's classroom teacher and his TSVI can communicate and agree that the student will be pulled out from the classroom and taught O&M skills whilst his classmates undertake, for example, Art. It is important to state that students with visual impairments should attend all subjects including Art and participate in meaningful activities. Yet, in some cases, pulling them out of the classroom might be necessary. Often students are pulled out of physical education, music, or drawing classes. Yet, students should be withdrawn during different classes (if needed) so that they do not miss opportunities to participate all activities from one particular class. With necessary adjustments, students with a visual impairment can also enjoy drawing classes and they should attend such classes.

One way to offer direct instruction on ECC skills without withdrawing the student out of his classroom is to establish effective communication with PSEC. Since PSECs are supposed to hire TSVIs and each student with visual impairment is eligible to receive up to twelve hours of instruction in a month, itinerant TSVIs can arrange the PSEC to instruct ECC skills before, or after the school day or over the weekends by using that twelve hours of instruction time. In addition, students can be offered one-to-one instruction before or after class, but also during a long weekend, spring or summer breaks by their itinerant TSVIs. These learning activities could be organised in a way to include other students with visual impairments so that students who are attending a mainstream school mix with other students with a visual

impairment - in some cases they could be the only child with a visual impairment in their school so it is good for them to meet other students with visual impairments and socialize. As well as learning ECC skills and having fun, Sport camps or other camps could be ideal for such a purpose (see, Lieberman et al., 2014a, 2014b; Haegele et al., 2014).

6.4.1.5 Practice and consistent reinforcing of instruction

Teaching ECC skills is a task which requires a professional qualification. Often these skills are taught by TSVIs and O&M specialists. Nevertheless, ECC skills can sometimes be taught, and always can be reinforced by, and practiced with, non-specialists (e.g. parents, class teachers, teaching assistants, peers). Specialist teachers / professionals can model and teach non-specialists to contribute to the development of ECC skills.

According to Sapp & Hatlen (2010, p.344), “many ECC skills can be practiced naturally throughout the day”. After a planned direct instruction by the TSVI, the student should be provided with sufficient time and environment to practise these newly learned skills. “Transition periods, lunch, and recess, can be used to identify the times when the student will practice the skills” (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p. 344). The classroom teacher, paraeducators, parents, peers and other school staff should be used in monitoring and providing honest feedback to the student to make sure they are mastering the skills correctly, especially when the TSVI is not present. In addition, necessary changes to the instruction could be made based on this feedback and performance data (Lieberman et al., 2014a; Haegele et al., 2014). Likewise, Lieberman et al., (2014a) recommend training peer tutors and using these peers in practising ECC skills. These peer tutors could be helpful, especially in increasing socialization and motor skills for students by offering positive role models and sincere feedback.

For example, after the student has been instructed about how to walk with his cane, his TSVI wants him to sweep his cane far away enough to protect his body but also close enough not to cause danger for himself and other people. Therefore, his parents, classroom teacher, paraeducator and one of his best friends are informed about what the student is supposed to do with his cane and how wide he should be making the arc. So his classroom teacher and paraeducator will give him feedback inside the classroom and inside of the building regarding the student is using his cane appropriately. In addition his best friend will provide feedback to the student when they are playing or hanging around in the garden. Finally, his parents will

provide him with feedback when he is at his local community (e.g. when he goes to a nearby park or grocery store with his parents). His TSVI will seek their observations and ask the student to demonstrate his skills before deciding to move onto the next task.

Nevertheless, some caution is needed. In the USA, Lewis & McKenzie (2010) found that both at mainstream schools and schools for the blind, paraeducators (teaching assistants) are taking an important role in the education of students with visual impairments. They are supporting students both in academic skills and the ECC skills. They are even frequently involved with direct teaching of some skills. Yet, Sapp & Hatlen (2010), Hatlen (1996, 2000), and Lewis & McKenzie (2010) do not approve of paraeducators (and even teachers) who have either no or very little expertise in teaching students with visual impairments of offering direct teaching in ECC skills. Although it is not preferred, whereby there is a very limited expertise, this method could be more justified. Therefore, I suggest that if there are not enough itinerant teachers to serve and offer direct teaching in all areas of the ECC (as is the case in Turkey at this time), paraeducators, classroom teachers and parents could be instructed by the TSVI and they could be used to offer training in some introductory skills - especially until sufficient numbers of qualified TSVIs are prepared and hired across the country.

For example, the TSVI can instruct and model how to teach folding clothes away or opening different packages to parents and paraeducators pretty quickly. Later on, when the TSVI is not present, the paraeducator can show how to open different packages to the student. Likewise, parents can teach and allow the child to open different types of packages at home so that the child can master these skills.

In short, to establish an appropriate curriculum balance, the practice and consistent reinforcement of many ECC skills must be overseen by non-specialists (under the guidance of specialists) so that the ECC skills could be fully taught to and mastered by the students with visual impairments.

6.4.1.6 Cross-curriculum working

Integrating ECC instruction into students' daily schedules is crucial for success in mastering the ECC skills by students with visual impairments (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Once some basic mastery is obtained by young people with visual impairments ECC skills can be and should

be utilised (and practiced) in other contexts. This includes cross-curricula working in schools because by a certain age almost all academic lessons will involve some use of ECC skills.

According to Sapp & Hatlen (2010, p.344), “incorporating the ECC skills into a student’s typical day can be challenging, but it is feasible”. It is possible to include most ECC skills and concepts in everyday teaching because some concepts and skills are already embedded in the general education curriculum. Sapp & Hatlen (2010, p. 344) also state that “most general education curricula include skills that overlap with the ECC”. For example, the general school curriculum requires working in groups which is linked to social skills in the ECC. Similarly, the school curriculum has elements of learning about different jobs and professions and this is also linked to career education in the ECC. Likewise, the curriculum contains skills regarding reading a map or cardinal direction which is also linked to the O&M component of the ECC. Similarly, students are taught money management skills which are part of the independent living skills of the ECC. Therefore, “teachers of students with visual impairments and O&M specialists can preteach, coteach, and reteach ECC concepts that are partially covered by the general curriculum as one way to incorporate the ECC into a student’s education” (Sapp & Hatlen, 2010, p.343).

To be more specific, when a student’s classroom teacher teaches cardinal directions and reading map skills, the student’s TSVI could plan a teaching session with the child to cover these skills. So, the student will be pulled out from his class and his TSVI will work one-to-one with him on these skills. After the instruction, he will be given a tactile map and asked to find a nearby shop to buy an ice-cream. In one activity, he will be able to learn and practise reading a map, figuring out directions, money management and cane skills as well other skills, e.g. social skills. On some occasions there is no need for students to be pulled out from the classroom; the classroom teacher and TSVI can co-teach these skills at the same time to the entire classroom.

As another example, most academic curriculum lessons involve accessing various kinds of information and using literacy skills. In this context students have the opportunity (and need) to use and develop the specialist literacy skills which are linked to the ECC, e.g. braille, low vision aids, search skills, and access technology. Simply, it is crucial and possible to integrate ECC skills into the everyday life of a student, including academic classes.

6.4.1.7 Inclusive schools and environments

Enabling young people to utilise and develop their ECC skills in school and other environments does require attention to inclusive practice. Even if the student learns the basic skills they need an appropriate physical and social environment to utilise, practise and improve their skills. This is also linked to my fifth research question which illustrated that there are barriers to and enablers for independence which are beyond the individual and their abilities. For instance, for a student to be able to exploit their skills with access technology there must be accessible files, worksheets, and text books electronically available. If such inclusive practice and environments are not available then no level of independence skills or instruction on these skills will enable a person with a visual impairment to function or learn independently.

To be more specific, if the student's TSVI taught him to read text by using his screen reader software, his classroom teacher should create the necessary materials electronically so that he can go online and practise and improve his skills whilst he is completing homework which his classroom teacher gave to all students. Likewise, if the student learned how to cross the street by using audio outputs, there should be traffic lamps with audio output so that they can practise these skills. This suggests as well as the students need to be taught the necessary skills, there should be an accessible school environment as well as an inclusive society.

6.4.1.8 Educational policies and resourcing

For previously discussed strategies to be implemented, there must be relevant policies and sufficient resources. Positively, existing policies do offer guidance on requirements for inclusive practice and the role of specialist staff.

Nevertheless, there are some emerging concerns which must be dealt with so that effective ECC training could be delivered. As much as the educational legislation and policies in Turkey for pupils with a disability(ies) are existent and descriptive, simultaneously, there is no official recognition of the ECC as being a crucial model to be utilised throughout such persons' educational lives as well as lives outside of the education system over time. Furthermore, the environmental barriers that exist – both socially and physically – creates and reinforces notions of disability that are placed upon the individual and therefore society is not adjusted appropriately. To begin to address these elements, the Turkish Ministry of Education as well as the Ministry for Families and Children has to officially recognise the

ECC as being a crucial program for students with visual impairments as well as those with other disabilities and set forth training programs for professionals and families. Furthermore, the Ministry for the Environment ought to develop better policies and practices that include adjustments that are made with disability specific accessibility in mind. As for services for the individual and their implementation procedures, applying Bronfenbrenner's framework in the manner Allman and Lewis (2014) put forward is very useful. Firstly, an early intervention service model should be developed and the role descriptions of each early intervention team member should be spelled out explicitly. The IEP process should be improved so that families and professionals work in a more cohesive manner to ensure that the needs of students are identified and appropriate training is delivered. The number of qualified specialists should be increased. Lastly, there are no transition services for students in Turkey. A transition model should be developed, legally recognized by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Families and Children as being crucial, and necessary measurements should be made to implement this.

6.4.1.9 Schools for the blind and conclusion

Lastly, I would like to briefly discuss how these strategies could be implemented at schools for the blind for students with visual impairments. Much of what is described above is applicable to and in these schools as well as mainstream settings. However, given schools for the blind are still a significant part of the Turkish educational landscape it is useful to consider them here. As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are sixteen schools for the blind across Turkey (MEB, 2015b) and preschool and primary education is provided there for students with a visual impairment (Eres, 2010; MEB, 2015a; MEB, 2015b). All of these schools have residential facilities and students can either board or attend as a day pupil, whichever they prefer (Eres, 2010).

Regardless of their school placements, early intervention services should be delivered to all children with a visual impairment as described above. Moreover, if students attend a school for the blind the provision model to teach the ECC could be delivered more intensively and easily because students will spend more time with qualified TSVIs. This will create the opportunity for TSVIs to integrate much more ECC training into in-class activities (including during academic instruction) and everyday school activities. Moreover, since the majority of students with a visual impairment will be boarding at a school for the blind (Cakiroğlu & Melekoğlu, 2014; MEB, 2015a; MEB, 2015b) educators will have much more time to instruct on ECC areas before and after school – including weekends. This will eliminate the need for

withdrawing the students out of their academic classrooms. For example, when the students wake up and prepare breakfast, whilst they are having their meals and preparing to go to bed, plenty of time is available to teach the ECC. In addition, whilst students are attending a school for the blind they are still eligible to receive support services from PSECs. Therefore, all the strategies described above for creating and accessing a balanced curriculum could be implemented easily at a school for the blind. Nevertheless, since there are valuable advantages to attending an inclusive school it is important to re-stress that this should not be interpreted as me encouraging students with a visual impairment to attend a school for the blind. In reality, I am trying to indicate that if existing resources are used to their maximum potential a balanced curriculum content could be created and accessed and students could be prepared with maximised independence – both at inclusive schools and at schools for the blind.

In conclusion, as I tried to illustrate above, in the existing conditions of Turkey, although there is a need for improvement in policy and implementation, there is already much useful legislation, policies and institutions to achieve an appropriate curriculum balance. However, policies must be applied appropriately and limited resources must be used efficiently in order to achieve a better curriculum balance, therefore leading to a better educational experience and outcomes for all students with visual impairments.

In the next section some of the barriers to and enablers for offering /receiving an ECC education and achieving an appropriate curriculum balance are discussed further, including the key point about limited resources.

6.5 The barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum

Participants from both studies raised several different barriers to and enablers for achieving an appropriate curriculum balance. The most important ones are discussed here and can be categorised into six broad categories: “family”, “educators”, “the national curriculum and the ECC”, “physical conditions and teaching materials”, “educational support services”, and finally “legislation”.

6.5.1 The family's role

Family was reported as an important factor in accessing training in ECC and subsequently establishing an appropriate curriculum balance for students with a visual impairment by both young adults and educators. Yet, according to the educators, parents were not aware of the importance of the ECC and since ECC is not assessed and most parents, together with the wider society, judge "success" in academic terms only, they therefore undervalue skills covered in the ECC. Furthermore, as discussed in section "5.5.1. Family's role" and section "5.2.3. Private Special Education Centres", when ECC training was available (e.g. at PSECs), parents preferred their children to receive training on academic subjects, and prepare them for national examinations (e.g. university entrance exams). Morris & Sharma (2011) gathered the views of itinerant TSVIs in Australia with regards to the inclusion of students with visual impairments in mainstream schools and pointed out a similar dilemma. They stated that parents may ask for unnecessary training which might hinder students' access to training in ECC. This illustrates that parents need to be informed about the ECC and its potential effects on children's lives, so that they can support training and also could advocate for a properly realised balanced curriculum.

Although it is important to acknowledge the role that parents could play in teaching ECC, it also ought to be noted that educators might blame parents unfairly to avoid taking responsibility for an inappropriate curriculum balance and the failure of the education system to prepare independent individuals with a visual impairment. For instance, eight of the thirteen educators saw instruction on the ECC as being a parental role rather than their own responsibility (see chapter 5, section "5.5.2.1 Educator indifference"). Despite this, it is clear that ECC skills need to be taught by qualified teachers such as TSVIs and O&M specialists (Douglas et al., 2009, 2011, 2012; Hatlen, 1996, 2000; Lewis et al., 2014; Sapp & Hatlen 2010). Parents can take a collaborative role in some areas, such as independent living skills, but their involvement does not relieve teachers of responsibility in teaching ECC skills (or monitoring the instruction which is delivered by the parents and other school staff) (Forster & Holbrook, 2005; Hatlen, 1996, 2000; Holbrook, 2008; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Lewis et al., 2014; McKenzie, & Lewis, 2008; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Moreover, although the general view was that parents did not support accessing a balanced curriculum, some educators made it clear that parents play a crucial role. As highlighted in chapter 5, section "5.5.1. Family's role", some parents even tried to learn how to use a cane so that they could teach their children. Overall, although parents can both positively and negatively influence training of ECC, this is less than educators claim due to the lack of control that parents have over the

decision-making process about their children's education in Turkey. Expecting students to be independent and asking their parents to teach ECC skills without delivering any training to either is not realistic. Rather, it seemed an attempt to avoid taking responsibility for the failure of the education system to prepare fully-independent individuals.

6.5.2 The educators

Regarding the educators, there were three major issues that frequently arose: (i) the low number of qualified TSVIs (ii) inappropriately prepared TSVIs and (iii) teachers' attitudes toward students with visual impairments and the ECC.

As described in the *Literature Review* (under the "2.2. The context: Education in Turkey"), since the beginning of the Republic there has been a need for specialist teachers in the field of SEN, including visual impairment. Although many countries experience a shortage of TSVIs it seems particularly severe in Turkey and significant changes have been made to the teacher preparation programme over time to resolve this shortage (see Citil, 2007; Enc, 2014; Küçükahmet, 2007; Ozyurek, 2008; Senel, 1998). Despite this however, it seems that this issue has yet to be resolved (aside from Gazi University, there is still no other institution preparing TSVIs in Turkey).

Apart from the number of educators, the quality of teacher preparation programmes for SEN is very important for the success of students with visual impairments (Brownell, Ross, Colon & McCallum, 2005; Ergul, Baydik & Demir, 2013; Ozaydin, 2015). The positive relationship between student success and the quality of teacher education programmes is frequently stated (Darling-Hammond, 2000). The TSVI preparation programme was established by educators with good intentions but limited expertise and experience and qualifications regarding students with visual impairments (see Citil, 2007; Enc, 2014). As such, the suitability of teachers who graduate from it is problematic. As illustrated in chapter 4, section "4.2. The experienced balance of curriculum content", participants who attended a school for the blind were not happy with their teachers. Although the majority of these who taught them in primary school graduated from a TSVI preparation programme, participants believe them to be unequipped with the necessary skills to teach ECC components (and academic subjects). Educators also often criticised themselves and their colleagues by stating they did not have the skills to teach the ECC (e.g. O&M). More specifically, a participant who is a university lecturer described one alumnus who has no independent travelling skills at all and is working as a TSVI at a school for the blind (see section "5.5.2.4 Quality of the educators").

It is ironic that teachers who are responsible for teaching and promoting independence to students with visual impairments are not independent themselves.

In line with this, the literature suggests that teachers often leave the teacher preparation programmes having not mastered all areas of the ECC (see Agran et al., 2007; Erin, et al., 2006; Holbrook, 2008; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2007, 2010). In Turkey, Ergul, Baydik & Demir (2013) conducted a study with 107 SEN teachers and 160 seniors in the undergraduate SEN programmes of four different universities. Only 25% of the participants felt confident in teaching academic skills to students with SEN. In addition, current studies point out that educators of students with visual impairments (including those working at schools for the blind) did not graduate with the necessary knowledge and experience to meet the requirements of these students, especially in O&M (see: Altunay-Arslantekin, 2015; Özaydın & Çolak, 2011; Ozaydin, 2015). This is not surprising when it is considered that professional standards for TSVIs include no direct reference to a concept of ECC and only "social skills" is included as an area that teachers should have knowledge on from ECC areas; moreover, implementation of this standard is ranked as the least-practised by teachers (see Kesiktaş & Akçamete 2011). It was also stressed that educators who are already in employment may not and/or cannot be updating their knowledge due to either a lack of interest or a shortage of opportunities for professional self-development (Ergul et al., 2013; Özsoy et al., 2010; Ozyurek, 2008; Seferoğlu, 2004).

Another issue raised was that TSVIs undertake different duties. Often, TSVIs are not hired to teach students with visual impairments directly and are asked instead to undertake duties such as conducting assessments at RAMs (Kesiktaş & Akçamete, 2011; Küçükahmet, 2007) or teaching students with different special needs. As summarised in the *Literature Review*, because of this – together with an historic shortage of qualified specialist teachers – other educators without TSVI or SEN training continue to replace them (Ataman, 2005; Çitil, 2007; Enc, 2014; Küçükahmet, 2007; Nartgün, 2010; Ozyurek, 2008). This was especially true for subject teachers. Such a practice has made it difficult to increase the quality of educators and teaching in the field (Ozaydin, 2015; Özyürek, 2008).

Regarding the quality of the educators, the most disturbing finding was their attitude. As presented in chapters 4 and 5, several participants (including educators) criticised the teachers as 'not being caring' and being 'neglectful'. They were considered disengaged and disinterested in the ECC. Furthermore, the participants with visual impairment stated that the

teachers acted as though they were not motivated to teach students with visual impairments. Their interpretation was that teachers were only doing this job to get their salary (see section "4.5.1.4 Attitudes of teachers (towards students with a visual impairment)"). Indeed, there are a number of studies that have investigated the reasons why people become teachers in Turkey and the studies find that there are serious problems with regard to this. For example, Eskicumalı (2002) conducted a study and found that teachers chose to teach as a profession because of a perception of having less work, lengthy vacations (37.1%), and a better chance of securing a job (37.1%), whereas "liking children" (23%) scored much lower. In another study, Ubuz & Sarı (2009) found that test scores are a major driver for people deciding whether to become a teacher. Likewise, Özsoy, Özsoy, Özkara & Memiş (2010) found that 59% of the 855 SEN teacher candidates decided to work in that field because their test scores did not allow them to work in different departments. All of these findings illustrate that teacher preparation programmes do not accept the most ideal candidates.

In addition to not accepting ideal teacher candidates to the teacher preparation programme (Nartgün, 2010), and not offering high quality teacher preparation (Altunay-Arslantekin, 2015; Özsoy, Özsoy, Özkara, & Memiş, 2010), teachers are assigned to teach students with visual impairments after drawing lots (Koçak & Kavak 2014; Nartgün, 2008; Sezgin & Duran, 2011). Due to this practice, teachers who may be willing to teach students with visual impairments could end up in a completely different institution and working with different group of students with or without disability. As a result, subject teachers often end up working in a school for the blind involuntarily, and demonstrate inappropriate attitudes towards students with visual impairments and do not promote their independence. Within the literature it is found that often teachers stated that they did not wish to have children with special needs in their classrooms. Gök & Erbaş (2011) found that 80% of preschool teachers with SEN students in their classroom did not want to teach a student with visual impairment. Similar results were also found by Özaydin (2015) and Özaydin & Çolak (2011). With these attitudes, it is difficult to expect teachers who end up at schools for the blind accidently (due to lot drawing) to be doing their best to prepare these students.

As mentioned before, the view of TSVIs regarding the responsibility of teaching ECC also seems to be problematic. Eight of the thirteen participants reported that teaching ECC was not their main responsibility and parents should be educated to teach some of the skills instead. Even if curricula were prepared with the ECC in mind the implementation of it would be affected significantly by teachers' attitudes, qualifications and behaviours (Ogborn, 2002;

Kelly, 2009). In short, under existing circumstances given teachers' beliefs and decisions about the curricula, students and their own job, it seems very difficult to meet the needs and promote independence of students with visual impairments. Therefore, teacher preparation process must be revisited to select more ideal teacher candidates and these candidates should be prepared adequately.

Lastly, although the participants with visual impairment reported many complaints and negative aspects regarding their educators, they did not hesitate to be thankful and to share their positive experiences regarding those who contributed to the ECC. Likewise, educators also pointed out colleagues who took a personal initiative to teach the ECC. For example, TSVIs in the study who themselves have a visual impairment were more sensitive to the needs of students with visual impairments and therefore focussed on the ECC more frequently than sighted colleagues. This suggests that when the educators have empathy drawn from their personal experience they pay more attention to teaching the ECC and promoting the independence of their students. However, these educators were seen as very rare, special and operating "above and beyond".

6.5.3 The national curriculum and the ECC

After the educators, the national curriculum was the second most frequently reported barrier to accessing an appropriate curriculum balance (see section "4.5.2. The national curriculum and the ECC" and section "5.5.3 The (non-)recognition of the ECC within the national curriculum"). According to both educators and young adults with visual impairments, the national curriculum is rigid and does not offer the chance to integrate the ECC. All schools throughout the country implement the national curriculum; they follow the syllabus as defined by the Ministry of National Education (MEB) which lists what and when is taught. Researchers in Turkey who conducted studies regarding the curriculum have concluded that this rigidity means that completing all subjects was difficult to achieve due to time constraints (e.g. Kapucu & Yıldırım, 2013, 2014; Öztürk & Bıkmaz, 2013). Furthermore, educators and young adults with visual impairments made it clear that the national curriculum does not recognise the ECC (or something similar) and that there are therefore no goals, benchmarks or time allocated to teach it. With regard to this, seven of the educators argued that there should be time to teach ECC in school timetables; if time was allocated to teach ECC, more training could be delivered. They confirmed that teaching academic subjects to students with visual impairments requires more time than teaching non-disabled students and as they had

to spend their time teaching the (already rigid and overloaded) national curriculum, which in itself was a challenge, they could not fit in anything additional (e.g. the ECC).

Moreover, due to a shortage of time, some educators felt that they faced a dilemma about whether to teach ECC or academic skills. They were aware of the necessity of ECC for students yet both parents and the curriculum dictated teaching academic skills instead. They explained that they realised that these skills should be taught by them as educators, but left them to families due to time limitations in school. Regardless of country and location, time is often listed as a major barrier to teaching ECC throughout the literature (see Allman & Lewis, 2014; Brown & Beamish, 2012; Brian & Haegele, 2014; Haegele et al., 2014; Hatlen 1996, 2000; Hatton, 2014; Lewis et al., 2014; Lewis & Allman, 2014; Lieberman et al., 2014a; Lieberman et al., 2014b; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Palmer, 2005; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010).

Three educators remembered that there used to be timetabled lessons at schools for the blind to teach disability-specific skills. However, these lessons were phased out in favour of an emphasis on the standard curriculum implemented at all schools across Turkey. This suggests a historical shift in relation to the curriculum balance. Although research identified that the historical shift in curriculum balance is needed, it can be speculated that maybe the MEB is attempting to implement a universally-inclusive curriculum, including everyone and excluding no one, by dictating the national curriculum (see: Liasidou, 2012). However, such a conceptualisation of inclusive education and its implementation faces many difficulties because of the lack of acknowledgment of the nuances of particular groups and the non-recognition of the specific needs of non-typical students, including those with a visual impairment.

Lastly, although both educators and young adults with visual impairments claimed that the national curriculum only reinforced academic skills and did not designate time for teaching ECC skills, they appear to miss the fact that knowledgeable and motivated teachers embedded ECC-specific skills into the academic curriculum. Furthermore, in order to achieve an appropriate balance, some educators recommended using time allocated to teaching academic skills to instead teach the ECC. Although this seems logical, this is probably not ideal. Training on ECC should be carried out without sacrificing the national curriculum, as this can have wider implications (e.g. lower achievement in national tests and lower university entrance percentages). Moreover, although the educators argued that there is no time specifically allocated to teaching ECC (and the literature supported this view), Gulsum

(a participant with a visual impairment) and Esra (a TSVI without visual impairment) pointed out that at schools for the blind there still might be some lessons whereby ECC skills could be taught. These lessons, specific to schools for the blind, could be used to teach more meaningful skills (e.g. O&M, social skills, and independent living skills), rather than making baskets.

6.5.4 Teaching materials and physical conditions

Some participants with visual impairment stated that they did not have canes of the appropriate length or enough computers equipped with necessary assistive technology, even at schools for the blind. Similarly, participants commented on a lack of kitchens and other areas where they could teach/learn ECC components. A number of publications highlight the physical limitations in teaching students in Turkish classrooms, including those with and without a visual impairment (e.g. Baybars & Kocakülah, 2009 Bulbul, 2013, 2014; Işıkoğlu, 2007; Ozturk & Bıkmaz, 2013; Ünlu, Pehlivan, & Tarhan 2010). Nevertheless, in the last decade the Republic of Turkey has spent more on education than ever before. It is estimated that approximately three billion dollars has been spent as part of a modernisation (FATIH) project, on improvements such as smart boards and giving PC tablets to all students and educators (Akgün, Yılmaz & Seferoğlu, 2011) and it is expected that more money will be spent. Although this project is exciting for the education system as a whole and is expected to improve the conditions at schools it is not clear whether the requirements of students with visual impairments have been considered. Neither has there been an empirical study on this matter and, therefore, a deeper investigation would be useful. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that advocacy groups for people with visual impairments are claiming that they have been forgotten and overlooked (see Eşitti, 2015; Polat, 2012). In my opinion, this period is a great opportunity to close the gap in accessing information between students with and without visual impairments. If the distributed devices are accessible and appropriate instruction on how to use them is offered to students with visual impairments, students will have the opportunity to access the curriculum independently, as well as learn crucial skills for life. These skills will assist them to undertake tasks independently in their everyday life as well as prepare them for competitive employment.

Returning to the previous discussion, although all educators mentioned the lack of facilities (e.g. a kitchen) for teaching ECC, when it came to educational materials they concentrated on those related to academic training rather than the ECC. They particularly highlighted the shortage of materials used to teach literacy, maths and science. Only one educator directly

commented on shortage of ECC materials, such as canes. This supports the view that the academic curriculum is prioritised over the ECC; or it could be argued that the lack of materials generally means that teaching the national curriculum is made more inefficient and this takes all their time and they cannot therefore teach any ECC skills. Even though reportedly, academic subjects are prioritised over the ECC across the education system it is concerning to encounter such a level of shortage of materials for even teaching the basic academic subjects, despite such levels of spending on modernisation as mentioned above. In short, it is disappointing and concerning to highlight the general shortage of instructional materials and facilities that were reported as barrier to teaching both the ECC and the national curriculum across the education system.

6.5.5 Educational support (including transition) services

All participants with visual impairments who attended a mainstream school indicated they were not referred to vision services such as O&M, assistive technology or Braille. Moreover, it appeared that all participants with visual impairment (and educators) could have benefitted from assistive technology devices, but none had received an assessment. It might be speculated that the reason for this could be because of a lack of services for students with a visual impairment, or if there was an available service, teachers were unaware.

It was also reported that there was no additional support at the mainstream schools for students with a visual impairment, such as para-educators, itinerant teachers, assistive technology specialists, O&M specialists or adaptive physical education teachers. As a result, teachers were not supported in teaching students with visual impairments in their classrooms and felt helpless. The reason for this lack of support seemed to be a dearth of specialists and services. However, it might also be said that although resources were limited, they were not used or managed to their maximum potential. For example, as discussed under section "5.5.2. The educators", there were very few TSVIs, yet most were hired to perform different duties. As an itinerant TSVI, Melek, said only two itinerant TSVIs were hired across the country to serve students with visual impairments (and support their teachers) for mainstream schools and they were not being used to their full potential. Melek travelled to a different school each day and functioned as a teaching assistant, working under the guidance of the classroom teacher. Preferably, the itinerant teacher would be expected to guide the general education teacher on the students' requirements (Conroy et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2014; Olmstead, 2005), but in this case the classroom teacher was guiding the itinerant teacher. Although it is well documented that itinerant teachers face challenges

meeting their students' needs, even in the USA and other developed countries (e.g. Brown & Beamish, 2012; Morris & Sharma, 2011; Olmstead, 2005), in Turkey the situation is much more depressing. Such management illustrates the under-development of the itinerant teaching model and could be considered a waste of limited resources.

On the other hand, although it was not reported explicitly, the lack of transition services is also a barrier to achieving an appropriate curriculum balance for preparing individuals as fully independent adults. Educators mentioned that in a very short space of time students with visual impairments began to be placed in mainstream settings without adequate planning or adjustments to ensure the venue's suitability for students. Furthermore, students are offered no instruction to equip them with the necessary skills to cope with these new environments. This situation is well documented (Cakiroğlu & Melekoğlu, 2014; MEB, 2015; Melekoğlu 2014; Sakız & Woods, 2015). However, it ought to be noted that none of the participants referred to the concept of "transition" services explicitly which suggests it is another concept/service not considered in Turkey. In short, the lack of transition services and additional support for educators and students with visual impairments seemed to be causing serious difficulties in both learning ECC skills and in the transition to adult life for students with visual impairments as independent individuals.

6.5.6 Legislation

Participants frequently reported issues with the legislation that governs SEN services in Turkey. These issues could roughly be categorised as a "lack of legislation" and "poor implementation of legislation". Firstly, although a lack of necessary legislation was raised by some participants, a higher number challenged this view stating that Turkey has the necessary legislation but there are issues with implementation that act as barriers to achieving an appropriate curriculum balance. Indeed, as presented in the literature review, and in section "6.4. The "ideal" balance of curriculum" Turkey does appear to have the necessary legislation for appropriate education and this legislation is very similar to other European countries (Akkök, & Zelloth, 2010; Bayram et al., 2015; Cakiroğlu & Melekoğlu, 2014; Meral & Turnbull 2014; Melekoğlu 2014; Sakız & Woods, 2015). Yet policies concerning vision services in particular (e.g. itinerant teachers), as well as other SEN laws and regulations are not well implemented and this has prevented students with visual impairments being served properly. Although a lack of qualified specialists and resources seemed to be the main issue in implementation, a wider study investigating implementation of such legislation is essential.

6.6 The barriers to and enablers for independence (beyond ECC and associated teaching)

As discussed above, educators and individuals with visual impairments reported that the main barrier to independence was a lack of preparedness due to an inappropriate curriculum balance, caused by a lack of appropriate training on the ECC. However, the data from both studies suggests that there are also barriers to independence which fall within the wider scope of the ECC (and associated teaching). As described in sections “4.6.2. Individually-based factors influencing independence” and “5.6.1. Individually-based factors influencing independence”, the findings of this study signal that although some challenges are present because of an individual’s characteristics (and if individuals are taught alternative methods they could be more independent), there are other factors that prevent independence. Therefore, although the medical model implemented via the ECC indeed empowers individuals to be able to navigate society with as little dependence on others as possible, it is also important to consider that there are challenges created by that environment. Even if individuals have the necessary skills they can still face challenges in their everyday life. This is recognised in the ICF. Simply put, according to the ICF, challenges can be experienced in everyday activities due to either the impairment itself or the environmental barriers (see below), or because of an interaction of the two. This section will first discuss the individually-based explanations and then the socially-based explanations of challenges to being independent (beyond the ECC and associated teaching).

6.6.1 Individually-based barriers to and enablers for independence

Beyond the received education on the ECC and preparedness for life, the data suggests that there are individual factors that influence a person’s likely independence level. These include: “remaining vision”; “internal motivation”; “self-learning”; “joy of success”; and “fear”.

An important factor that influenced the independence of individuals with visual impairments is the existence of any remaining vision. Both educators and young adults with visual impairments stated that most participants with low vision were more independent than totally blind participants. In addition to participants with low vision, participants with total blindness also confirmed that remaining vision contributes to being independent. It also ought to be noted that other research findings illustrate that having low vision offers advantages over total blindness in everyday life. For instance, a number of studies indicate that having remaining vision is a positive factor in influencing employment (Cavenaugh et al., 2006;

Douglas et al., 2009; La Grow, 2003, 2004; La Grow & Daye 2005; McDonnall et al., 2014; Wolffe et al., 2002; Wolffe & Kelly, 2011). Despite this, Darensbourg (2013) found that the percentage of individuals with severe visual impairment in employment was higher than their counterparts with mild visual impairments. In addition, some studies found blind individuals to be in a higher earning category than individuals with low vision (e.g. Bell, 2010; Bell & Mino, 2013; Darensbourg, 2013). More specifically, Bell & Mino (2013) found that those who used a white cane for daily mobility were employed at a significantly higher rate and earned a significantly greater annualised salary than those who did not; also those who read Braille on a daily or weekly basis were employed at a significantly higher rate than those who did not (Braille readers also earned on average $11,000 more than non-Braille readers). These findings could be interpreted to mean that if individuals with total blindness prepared adequately, they might be more successful than individuals with low vision (who had not been prepared appropriately). However, without proper training those individuals with remaining useful vision are at an advantage when it came to independent living and finding employment.

Although participants with visual impairment saw this situation as being problematic and attributed it to a lack of ECC-training and environmental barriers, educators appeared to see it as natural. This might be because most individuals with visual impairments subscribe to the social model of disability and believe that the environment presents barriers to their independence, whereas educators are more influenced by the individual model of disability whereby they consider the individual as a source of limitation as outlined in the literature (e.g. Brisenden, 1986; Bury, 1997, 2000; Lancet, 2009; Owens, 2015). This suggests that both parties (educators and young adults with visual impairments) were avoiding responsibility and attributing the challenges faced to others (see section “2.1.2. Models of disability and ICF” for a brief overview of this).

Besides remaining vision, each individual’s “Internal Motivation” level is different. Even if no individuals received ECC training, some would be more motivated than others to try and explore their environment. As a consequence they would develop strategies to interact with their environment (“self-learning”) and if this subsequently results in them overcoming challenges, it may cause them to feel happy. This “joy of success” seemed to be very important in becoming independent.

On the other hand, not all individuals will be able to overcome encountered challenges. Those who encounter tougher challenges might fail the task they are trying to overcome and therefore experience negative experiences. Moreover, as illustrated in sections “4.6.2.5 Negative experiences” and “4.6.2.6 Fear”, negative experiences cause “fear” to develop which hinders explorations and learning. In short, the characteristics that the person develops via interaction with their environment varies. This difference will also influence independence levels. However, it is important to acknowledge that most of these individually-based explanations overlap with the ECC and could be improved via direct and/or indirect instruction.

6.6.2 Environmentally-based barriers to and enablers for independence

As both the ICF and Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-ecological model suggest, beyond the characteristics of the individual, the environment plays a crucial role in the development and participation of a human being in everyday life. In this section, socially-based explanations are considered in terms of how they influence the independence of individuals with visual impairments by acting as either barriers or enablers. These factors are presented from the closer circle to outer in accordance with Bronfenbrenner’s Bio-ecological model (see section “4.6.1. The Bio-ecological model of human development” for an overview).

6.6.2.1 Family

Throughout the interviews, family was frequently cited as a central element of human development and an essential microsystem (defined as the immediate Bio-ecological level influencing the development of the child). The participants with visual impairment thought family was a very important element in their development of independent living skills and the educators shared this view. The influence of the family can be classified as either: “family as a barrier”; or “family as an enabler”.

Prevention or discouragement from doing some tasks, providing negative feedback, and over-protection by family members were some negative factors that influenced individuals’ independence. As illustrated in chapters 4 and 5, parents often acted as a barrier to being independent because of a lack of awareness, i.e. families did not know that their children could be independent, developed lower expectations, and limited their involvement in different learning opportunities. This led to children being over-protected and opportunities to promote their independence not being created. In turn, the children got used to their needs

being met by their parents and did not see any value in being independent. This even led them to developing negative attitudes of their own abilities and to think that they were unable to do things.

Although there were many negative criticisms reported by the participants regarding parents' attitudes to developing their independence, there were some instances in which the family contributed to and played an important role in promoting independence. Nuray was the only participant who had used assistive technology devices (e.g. a video magnifier) from an early age. Her family provided them and encouraged her in their use. This confirms the earlier point whereby some parents fill the gap left by schools and TSVIs. It also suggests that there is a big difference in the attitudes of parents. Although some were reported to be very aware of the importance of independence and supported their children's independence, like Nuray's family, most of them were over-protective and prohibitive, such as Fatma, Gökhan, and Can's parents.

Lastly, as a natural consequence of not having the opportunity to practice skills at home, most participants who described themselves as independent mentioned that they only developed their independence once they had left their parental home. Moreover, it was not only participants who classify themselves as independent, but also participants who think they are not independent stated that being far away from family would have a positive impact on the development of independence. Simply put, being away from family was a positive contributor to independence because it prevented family from inhibiting children from getting around, exploring and gaining new experiences. This illustrates that parents should be supported so that they can contribute to developing the independence of their children.

6.6.2.2 The school environment and teachers' attitudes

As another crucial microsystem in the Bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner 2005), school was a factor that influenced the independence of participants. All comments regarding schools and teachers were negative or neutral which indicated that school bore no positive contribution to independence (except through the special effort of a select few). Participants reported that students with visual impairments were prevented from moving around inside and outside of school and even from using their canes whilst at school, this included schools for the blind. This underscored why participants with visual impairments did not feel comfortable about their visual impairments, did not want to disclose their impairments to

people around them and did not want to ask for help (see 4.3.6). In short, similar to some parents, the majority of educators over-helped, banned the use of canes and limited and preventing children with visual impairments from moving around. In this regard only few promoting the independence of individuals with a visual impairment.

6.6.2.3 Role models and friends

One of the most important layers (microsystem) of the social environment is friends. Because of very limited or no training on the skills covered in the ECC and limited support from families and society, the influence of participants' friends is crucial in developing independence. Participants with visual impairments reported sharing knowledge and encouraging each other to be independent. Moreover, participants were not only sharing information with each other but also they were guiding and motivating each other to be independent. Sometimes, participants were inspired by simply being around other people who are visually impaired and independent. It seems knowing positive role models is important in the pursuit of education, training, and employment – this was also found by Bell & Mino (2013). In short, as an essential microsystem, friends who can act as role models appear to be important in promoting independence in a climate with a shortage of training.

6.6.2.4 The physical environment and accommodations

Nine participants with visual impairment stressed that physical barriers were important factors in decreasing their self-confidence in travelling independently and participating in society. As illustrated in sections "4.6.3.4. Physical barriers and the lack of accommodations" and "5.6.2.5. The physical environment", poor pavements, inaccessible traffic lights and public transport were reported as problematic. The educators often referred to physical barriers as well. In "5.6.2.5. The physical environment", a university lecturer reported that due to a poor physical environment (e.g. lack of pavements, cars parked blocking the pavement and other obstacles) not only do individuals with visual impairments, but also individuals without a disability face difficulties in getting around.

As discussed in chapters 4 and 5, and earlier in this chapter, ten of the twelve participants with visual impairments were hired to meet the disability quota. However, none reported having access to satisfactory assistive technology devices to make their lives easier. The school system didn't provide such tools and there was no organisation (similar to the

Rehabilitation Council in the USA) to provide these devices or instruction in how to use them after school. Some of the young adults with visual impairments said that although they have the necessary skills, due to a lack of an appropriate physical environment and a lack of the necessary adjustments or modifications for staff with visual impairment in the work place, they could not perform their job as independently as they wanted. As Bengisu et al., (2008) found in their study conducted in Turkey, 76% of employees with visual impairments frequently need help from their colleagues due to a lack of necessary accommodations. Simply put, physical barriers (including poor accessibility) present challenges to people with visual impairments in getting around and performing their jobs even if they have the necessary skills.

6.6.2.5 Society and culture

The exosystems layer sees life in a broader context and covers the wider community in which a person lives (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). As an important layer of the environment, society was one of the most important factors in influencing the independence of individuals with a visual impairment. Participants with a visual impairment found the "inappropriate reactions and interactions of society" to be one of the most frequent barriers to their independence. For instance, participants reported that when they go out others' looks and questions bother them and discourage them from doing a variety of tasks which would identify them as being visually impaired, such as using a cane. Therefore, they reported that they avoided asking for help or using devices which may have revealed their visual impairment – even when they were needed badly. Similarly to participants with a visual impairment, the educators stated that society's lack of awareness and the negative approaches and reactions from the public hindered the development of independence by the individuals with visual impairments. This is supported by Yazıcı et al.'s (2015) findings: society is not very knowledgeable about people with visual impairments and people often make comments and ask questions which bother individuals with a visual impairment and their parents.

When I considered possible reasons for such negative attitudes towards people with disabilities, it seemed important to me to consider the dominant religion in Turkey. In Islam, "everything revolves around one powerful character called 'Allah' (God)" (Turmusani, 2008, p.76) and Allah is perfect in all aspects, including power and physical character (e.g. seeing, hearing, walking etc.); therefore, those who have difficulties with these aspects (i.e. are disabled) are not considered normal and are viewed as being less of a person and different

(Turmusani, 2008, p.76). Turmusani (2008) examined the holy book, and he identified a number of references which portrayed people with impairments in negative ways, and often associated them “with evil-doers, unbelievers, and even beasts, and others” (p.77). Likewise, Turmusani (2008) claimed that Islamic enemies are frequently portrayed with physical disfigurements. For instance, those who will loot the holy place in Mecca are described as having short legs; likewise, Al-dajal (similar to the ‘Antichrist’ in Christianity) is also described as being a short man with one eye (p.77). Similarly, those with low intellectual abilities are described as being devious. “The time when deaf and dumb people become able to take part in public affairs” is given as a sign of the end of days (Turmusani, 2008, p.78). Naturally, Turmusani (2008, p.77) concludes that such representations have “served to perpetuate negative attitudes and discriminative practices towards people with a disability in their societies”. Therefore, some negative attitudes experienced by people with visual impairments can be linked to religious teaching and their interpretation of religion and other cultural values in Turkey.

On the other hand, Lutfu, a deputy head of a school for the blind, made an interesting point. Unlike in many western cultures, he argued that in Turkey people are willing to help people with disabilities without being prompted. This seemed to be linked to the Islamic belief regarding disability and people with disabilities. As described in sections “2.9.2.2. An explanation of disability in Islam” and “2.9.2.3. Disability in Turkish culture”, in addition to the negative views, it is widely accepted that people with a disability are subject to a faith test by Allah and if they pass this test they will be rewarded by Allah. In fact, several Qur'anic and Hadith narrations indicate that Allah promises both those who are in a disadvantaged situation, and those who take care of them, that they will be rewarded both in this life and in the hereafter for their patience (Al-Aoufi, et al. 2012). More specifically, Prophet Mohammed stated that whoever guides someone who is blind in both eyes for 40 steps will be rewarded with heaven (Özçelik, 2010). Indeed, this promise usually motivates people to support the disadvantaged, whether they are strangers or close relatives. Therefore, under these conditions it is not surprising that people with disabilities are offered help by strangers around them without first requesting it.

Nevertheless, although Lutfu considered this help to be an enabler rather than a barrier to their independence, individuals with a visual impairment sometimes complained about these attitudes (see “4.6.3.4. Approaches of people on the street”). It is possible that Lutfu considered this support to be an enabler because he thinks some individuals might find

travelling easier with it. Nevertheless, as Shakespeare (2006) pointed out, such charitable support can have unwanted consequences on the lives of people with disabilities since it causes dependence and inequality. Moreover, this support might devalue and discourage self-motivation amongst individuals with disabilities (Oliver & Barnes, 1998). Equally, society may think all individuals with a visual impairment need their help and cannot become independent. This view may contribute to developing further negative bias and devaluing due to perceiving them as incomplete people. Finally, such charitable support might contribute to seeing individuals with a visual impairment as an easy way to gain the positive attitude of Allah rather than helping them in a way that enhances their self-motivation and independence within society.

In addition to religious teachings, based on cultural attitudes and everyday interactions with people with a visual impairment, it seems that society has already developed an image of people with a visual impairment which is negative. Historically, individuals with a visual impairment were denied education and employment and are associated with unemployment or vocations which are undesirable (e.g. begging). This combination of societal attitudes, image and a lack of expectations has led to a lack of education and employment opportunities for people with a visual impairment. In turn this has led to barriers to achieving independence – despite such persons wanting to participate in society leading to further misconceptions about what people with a visual impairment can and cannot do.

Moreover, current practices seem to contribute further to the bias towards people with visual impairments. For instance, as a result of the mandatory disability quota (a progressive policy introduced to increase inclusion of disabled people in employment), many companies may have hired employees with a visual impairment to avoid paying fines, even if the person with a visual impairment did not have the necessary skills and qualifications. Since staff members with a visual impairment may end up incapable of doing the job due to a lack of skills (itself a lack of training) and poor accessibility of the work environment, then companies may have inadvertently assisted people in developing further negative attitudes towards people with a disability.

Another crucial factor that influences the everyday life of individuals with a visual impairment and has emerged consistently throughout the study is gender roles. Eleven educators and young adults with a visual impairment referred to gender differences and related issues directly and indirectly. Male participants with a visual impairment reported that they were

often not allowed to take part in any household duties by their parents because these duties are considered to be for females. Yet in contrast they are given more freedom to travel around. Similarly, female participants seemed much more protected and limited than males with regard to going out of their homes, whereas they were given more opportunities to learn and perform household roles. Overall, the general cultural view is that girls are more protected and limited in their freedom than boys and this is something that may be exacerbated when disability is involved. Even though this situation might immediately be associated with parental approaches, this is also intertwined with cultural values. Below, I discuss expectations of patriarchal Turkish society.

A serious issue in current Turkish society is gender inequality. The difference between males and females is not due just to their biological differences but it is rather due to their gender roles in a society which is constructed around a dominant male culture (Aslan & Şeker, 2013). As described in section "2.9.2. Turkish culture", Turkey is commonly described as a male dominant patriarchal society, in which women are restricted in many areas of life, including equal participation in economic and social life (Aslan & Şeker, 2013). This patriarchal society existed before the country converted to Islam, although it has been argued that there used to be a more acceptable gender equality (Mutlu, 2014). Turkish interactions with other cultures, especially Persian, Byzantine and Arabic cultures, influenced their understanding of gender and led to them becoming more patriarchal (Ersoy, 2009; Mutlu, 2014). The role of women has been shifted from being fully independent people who took part in wars, economical practices and administration to playing a role limited to being a good wife and carer (Ersoy, 2009; Mutlu, 2014). It seems that Islam, and the interaction with Arabic culture in particular, may have contributed to this change.

Turmusani (2008, p.76) states that, "In Islam, men are superior to women and women must accept men's authority and obey their commands". In the Hadith, women are viewed as spiritually lesser beings who are responsible for the downfall of humanity; they were created for the comfort of men and for procreation, and furthermore, they have not been allowed to take up official religious roles such as being an Imam (Turmusani, 2008, p.76-79). Turmusani (2008) adds that women are also disadvantaged with regards to pursuing economic and political activities in Islamic societies. For instance, women need two witnesses instead of one (as is the case with men) in business transactions. This could be interpreted as Islam contributing to creating a more patriarchal society and explicitly internalising male

dominance. Consequently, arguably disabling practices against women with and without disabilities in Middle Eastern culture are witnessed in everyday life.

Nevertheless, attributing all gender inequality to Islam is unfair. Before Islam, and Prophet Mohammed, in Arabic cultures having a daughter was to be considered embarrassing as daughters were not seen as worthy of being raised by their parents, especially since they would not contribute to the family's economic income. Therefore, girls were often killed (Guner, 2007: Sevgili, 2007). Although Çayır & Çetin (2011) illustrated with examples from the Qur'an that under some circumstances Islam allows violence toward females, they argue that the violence described in the Qur'an should be considered a revolution. This is because Islam brought about a revolution by giving more value to women and banning barbaric practises toward women by encouraging less problematic practises, e.g. beating instead of killing (Guner, 2007).

However, it is possible to anticipate that the violence encouraged by the Qur'an can be misinterpreted and still used to justify violence against women today. Although Islam and the Prophet Mohamed brought a significant positive change to the everyday life of women this momentum has not been maintained and many men still want to maintain rights and responsibilities over women in line with the standards set 1400 years ago. Indeed, Çayır & Çetin (2011) claim that Islam does not contain violence in its nature, yet some people manipulate the religion to make discrimination and violence seem acceptable in some circumstances so that they can have advantages over others. This seems valid, especially in male and female relationships. There are different versions of violence including physical, sexual, psychological and economic. In this section I would like to particularly focus upon "*namus*", a type of honour in Turkish and other Middle Eastern cultures, particularly drawing upon Sev'er & Yurdakul's (2001) feminist analysis.

According to Sev'er & Yurdakul (2001, p.971), "In the West, honour is often defined as moral integrity, the esteem accorded to virtue or talent", yet both the depth and the breadth of an eastern understanding of honour is very different to that of western culture, in that not only are one's own characteristic virtues viewed as a valued possession but so is the family name and integrity (Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001). Regardless of one's conditions, no one is exempt from trying their best to maintain an honourable life and "to protect their own as well as the family name from insinuations or open charges of dishonour" (Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001). A

positive aspect of this kind of honour is that it enables the acquisition of a noble social standing within a culture regardless of one's economic status, however, the negative influence of this often admirable eastern tradition is when honour becomes an obsession which people exploit to judge others (Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001; Yurdakul, 1999). Sev'er & Yurdakul (2001) indicate that in some extreme cases judgements over honour (especially, *namus*) can and do become deadly in the form of honour killings. Nevertheless, underlying these extreme cases may be traditions which are reflected in everyday life, and some of the findings from my research.

Namus is the honour connected to one's proper sexual conduct, especially with the consideration of one's community's expectations, and females in particular are usually expected to behave in certain ways (Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001). Therefore, there is also an element of possible shame regarding women and their families, whereby they must protect their *namus.* Their reputation of *namus* even rubs off on their children and society makes judgements about their offspring based on this (Yurdakul, 1999).

After the mother, "the greatest dishonour of a man derives from the impurity of his wife" (Pitt-Rivers, 1974, p.52) or his sister and daughter. Hence, a female's sexuality in terms of her honour and *namus* is viewed as being her responsibility as well as the family males' responsibility, so the men in a family see it as their duty to sanction women who are deemed deviant (Goodwin, 1994; Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001). Middle Eastern Islamic culture connects *namus* with women's bodies, whereby males are viewed as protectors of the family *namus* and female members' *namus*; a secular interpretation of this is the commodification of women (Sev'er & Yurdakul, 2001).

Sev'er & Yurdakul (2001) collate several extreme examples of honour killings which they argue are linked to the concept of *namus.* All these horrible examples illustrate how women were sometimes killed for little acts or suspicions such as going to the cinema without consent, coming home late, dating or having a song dedicated on a local radio. Simply, the masculine-centred quality of *namus* has led to potentially severe consequences for women who sexually deviate from the expected norms of their community, and this is especially true in rural parts of Turkey (Delaney, 1987; Farac, 1998); it continues to be one of the greatest

causes of violence against women (Biligili & Vural, 2011; Can & Edirne, 2011; Cindoglu, 1997; Cook & Dickens, 2009).

However, it is important to stress that these incidences are extreme, relatively uncommon, and do not reflect all Turkish culture (see Özyeğın, 2008). Moreover, it is also important to highlight that violence against women still is a serious issue in Turkey and it does not take place only because of *namus* or honour killings.

According to the report of "We will stop women murders platform" (KAD-MER, 2015), thankfully, no women were killed because of "honour killings"/*namus* during 2015 in Turkey. Although this is a good sign, in total, 303 women were killed by men during 2015. This highlights the existence of the patriarchal hierarchy in Turkish culture: 78% of these women were killed because they wanted to make their own decisions about their own lives e.g. they wanted a divorce, to end a relationship, to make economic decisions. Nevertheless, men's hegemony did not allow this and males who are very closed to these women punished them. Despite 46% of these women's murderers not being known, among the 54% known: 90 of were killed by their husbands; 40 by their boyfriends; 20 by their ex-husbands; 10 by their ex-boyfriends; 10 by their sons; and 8 by their fathers. These figures horribly illustrate the present level of violence against women in Turkey. Moreover, it shows how overall Turkish women are restricted by their males in making decisions about their own life and living an independent life.

Returning to the actual discussion on gender issues, as presented above, Turkish culture is quite different to American culture in many ways but especially in terms of given value on *namus* and females' virginity. Although I have little information about the background of the participants, e.g. if they come from a conservative or liberal family or if their parents were born in a rural or urban area, this discussion on *namus* and patriarchal views in Turkey assists understanding why some female participants might be more protected and restricted than male participants. Based on the discussion above, all members of society, regardless of whether they have a disability or not, are responsible for protecting their *namus* and the *namus* of others in their family; considering that females with a disability are seen as being more vulnerable to having their *namus* stained their parents, as well as other family members might feel more of a need to protect their *namus* by over-protecting and restricting their actions. Of course, this will lead to a situation whereby they will have fewer opportunities to go out of their homes independently and to participate in every part of modern life in

comparison to males with visual impairments as well as women who come from more the liberal section of Turkish society. Indeed, this perspective may also be internalised by the female participants. For example, Fatma, a female participant, stressed her fear and her lack of trust in other people by stating others' worries, "what if people take her somewhere and do something wrong". This refers to her fear of facing any danger, and perhaps regarding staining her *namus* (see section 4.6.4.2 Fear).

Moreover, regardless of a disability, such practices to protect *namus* might have an influence on the gender gap across Turkish society. Existing research results highlight the wide gender divide in school access (MEB, 2015); access to employment (Arat, Icagasıoğlu-Çoban & Polat, 2013; Sağlam & Bostancı, 2012); and many other aspects of life in Turkey. In addition, women, especially the ones with disabilities, have a significantly lower graduation rate from higher educational institutions than their male counterparts (TUIK, 2015). More specifically, Bengisu et al. (2008), Balta & Bengisu (2012) and Bengisu & Balta (2011) highlight the significantly lower access to employment by females with a visual impairment compared to males in the same situation. Although I have not encountered any author making such a connection, I do think that such practices protecting *namus* is likely to be a reason for this gender inequality in accessing education, employment and all domains of social life for women both with and without a visual impairment.

Lutfu, a deputy head teacher at a school for the blind, indicated that more ECC training would be beneficial to students, although he suggested this training should be delivered based on students' genders and roles in society. This view could easily be linked to the traditional view regarding the role of females and males in the family. Since traditionally women are to be good wives, and girls must behave well, and remain a virgin until marriage, Lutfu might be consciously or unconsciously over-protecting female students with visual impairments from any sort of danger by limiting their participation in everyday life, including educational activities. Maybe he considers everyday life activities as opportunities for females to meet someone who they could have an emotional relationship with – which might lead to their *namus* being stained.

It is not possible to explain the outlying understanding of Lutfu's thoughts with absolute certainty; nevertheless, when these cultural values are considered, it is possible that Lutfu prioritises the girls' *namus* over their independence. Consequently, he tailors a role for females which is just about completing household duties, and therefore, he felt that they

should receive training on these areas of the ECC rather than all aspects – including the tasks which go beyond the home – and this is to make sure that their *namus* is protected until their marriage and even after marriage by restricting them to their house. However, Turkey has been influenced by other, specifically western, culture(s) in recent years and a huge modernisation process has been taking place since the 1920s (Arat, 2001; Combers, 2007; Ersoy, 2009; Mutlu, 2014). Based on this modernisation, the majority of modern Turkish young adults would not agree with such segregation and limited roles for females. Moreover, according to the Turkish constitution males and females are equal (1982), which would not allow any different instruction based on gender (as Lutfu wanted).

In summary, culture and society has been a major influence on the everyday life of individuals with a visual impairment as an enabler or barrier. Individuals with a visual impairment need to learn and perform all ECC skills regardless of their gender, yet the impact of the culture needs to be considered carefully. In addition to providing instruction on ECC, the environment should be designed to be accessible at all levels, including the cultural values and attitudes of society, so that individuals with a visual impairment can be fully integrated into their community.

6.7 Conclusion

There were very strong views from both educators and young adults with visual impairments regarding the lack of appropriate ECC education offered across the education system, including in schools for the blind and mainstream schools. Although existence of some ECC training (e.g. Braille) was reported in schools for the blind, the amount was so small that there appeared to be little added value in attending a segregated school (it also kept people with visual impairments away from their typically-developing peers which means some peer learning might be missed). Furthermore, the students who attended a school for the blind were not taught the whole curriculum due to qualifications of the teachers and limited resources. In contrast, students who attended a mainstream school were offered the whole academic curriculum albeit not in an accessible fashion. This was due to a lack of educational support regarding the additional curriculum combined with access to the academic curriculum. This finding leaves me with the following question which I could not answer: which school setting is better at preparing students with visual impairments in terms of both academic curriculum and the ECC?

The analysis suggests that the existing services do not pay much attention to the ECC, and that an appropriate balance between the academic curriculum and ECC has not been achieved, even in schools for the blind. As a consequence of poor ECC training, individuals reported facing challenges in everyday life, including developmental delays, unpleasant schooling, becoming dependent on others, isolation, psychological and emotional challenges, low self-esteem, problems with health and safety, and lower academic attainment. Furthermore, due to these difficulties, they unintentionally cause other people to develop biased and negative stereotypical views of people with a disability which in turn exacerbates the difficulties people with a disability face.

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that although educators listed several negative consequences of a poor curriculum balance upon individuals' lives, the amount of ECC training they delivered is limited. This shows that either teachers have barriers preventing ECC training from being delivered, or they had not considered the importance of ECC for individuals with visual impairments and the effect of its absence on lives until they heard the interview questions.

It is also important to stress that the nature of visual impairment is important in this study. As can be seen in "Table 1 – Overview of participants", the majority of participants in Study 1 had a deteriorating visual condition. This might have influenced their responses and the overall findings of this research. The transition from being sighted or having low vision to total blindness is difficult, especially, under circumstances that are far from offering the necessary extensive support. Since this study included very few individuals with congenital blindness, results should be treated cautiously because individuals with that condition might be more positive about their everyday experiences than individuals who lost their eyesight later.

Bearing this in mind, the age of participants is also an important factor when considering this study. Based on my personal experience as a person with a visual impairment, I anticipated that young adults with a visual impairment might offer a completely different view on necessity of ECC compared to children and pupils with visual impairments. To be more explicit, since all young children, including ones without visual impairment, have little need to be independent (throughout their childhood years), they may not be aware of the ECC and the benefits of being independent. Particularly since parents, including disabled and non-disabled children's, meet the majority of their needs that emerge over time, younger people may not perceive the value of ECC or see that it deserves time and effort. Especially, since

they do not like to appear different to their peers; they might easily avoid receiving any instruction on the ECC. Yet, when they get older, their needs change. For instance, a child might not mind meeting their friends whilst their parents are present but a teenager or an adult, would hate to meet a peer (especially, a crush), whilst parents are present. Moreover, as they get older, needs change and parents then cannot always meet these needs: they might want to go to a rock concert whilst their parents hate the music. Therefore, after a certain age, I anticipate that even individuals who previously placed no value in learning the ECC, might recognise its value and become willing to learn when they become adults (and regretful they had not learnt it before).

Moreover, they would recognise that they would have to have a different life to their parents including marriage, moving away for school or employment or even they if they consider that their parents are getting old, so they will not be able to meet his/her needs anymore and instead, maybe it is his/her time to take care of their parents. Therefore, despite previous thoughts about the ECC (even if they were very negative), as people develop into adults, they might want to learn ECC-skills and become more independent. Therefore, I anticipate that had I interviewed a younger group of people with visual impairments, their views regarding ECC and educational life would be different; they might even have been more positive about schooling and teachers and place less value on the ECC. However, even if I had interviewed the same participants whilst they were in the school system, it is possible they would be less passionate about the ECC and becoming independent. Other researchers have found that it is after children with visual impairments have left school that they reflect back on independence skills they wish they had learnt while at school (e.g. McBroom, 1997). The young adults with visual impairments I interviewed are at an age when they want to establish their own life; they are able to judge their educational journey and current life more objectively regarding training they received at school and challenges they are facing currently. Indeed, this is why I chose young adults with visual impairments as participants rather than students with visual impairments who are still in compulsory education in Turkey.

In relation to an “ideal” curriculum balance, the existing education system appears to fail to offer a broad and balanced curriculum. Whatever the educational setting the participants consistently felt that more ECC training should be delivered. Nevertheless, it is not easy to offer a precise definition of what an ideal curriculum balance should be – I do advocate that individuals should be offered accommodation and modifications so that they can access the full curriculum whilst they are also offered training on the ECC regardless of their school. The

nature of this balance will vary from individual to individual, and will also change over time. However, if the existing resources (e.g. TSVIs, time) are increased and used in a more efficient manner, a better curriculum balance could be established (as I tried to illustrate in section “6.4. The “ideal” balance of curriculum”).

Another issue arises with the roles and responsibilities of PSECs. PSECs offer instruction in Turkish, maths and independent living skills. Yet if students are also attending schools where they are taught national curriculum subjects (including maths and Turkish), it begs the questions: (i) why are these subjects retaught; and (ii) why is only one third of the time allocated to teaching skills which are part of the ECC at PSECs? Moreover, as clearly stated in section “5.2.3 Private Special Education Centres”, even in the little time allocated to teaching ECC, academic subjects are often taught instead. This illustrates that PSECs’ roles need to be redefined and that they should be better off focussing on ECC training whilst leaving academic instruction to schools.

When the barriers to and enablers for accessing a balanced curriculum were examined, participants listed many barriers and very few enablers. Overall, the findings illustrated that although some challenges are present because of an individual’s characteristics (and if individuals are taught the alternative ways to do things they could be more independent), there are (environmental) factors beyond the individuals that prevent their independence. Therefore, when considering each education-system stakeholder (including society), necessary measurements should be taken to make sure an appropriate curriculum balance is established and independence can be promoted e.g. family members, teachers and other school staff, decision makers, people on the street and physical environment along with legislation and culture. I do hope the recommendations offered in section “7.4 Recommendations” will be helpful in achieving this.

In summary, this chapter attempted to blend the findings of the two studies in discussing the research questions with reference to the existing literature whilst simultaneously questioning why the findings may be so. The next chapter aims to draw together the various strands of the research project and the thesis. It will offer a final response to each research question in turn and then progress to the contributions made. It then offers recommendations to enable different stakeholders of the education system and society to access a more appropriate curriculum balance and promote the independence of individuals with a visual impairment. The chapter concludes with some final reflections.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this final chapter is to draw together the various strands of the research project and the thesis. The chapter begins with a final response to each research question in turn and then progresses to the contributions provided (e.g. “The contribution to methodology”, “The contribution to theory” and “The contribution to practice”). Later on, it offers recommendations to enable different stakeholders of the education system and society (e.g. policy makers, the Turkish Ministry of National Education, educators, and families) to access a more appropriate curriculum balance and promote the independence of individuals with a visual impairment. Finally, the chapter concludes with some reflections, including “The strengths and limitations” of the study and “Recommendations for future studies”.

7.2 Answering the research questions

As stated previously, this study is concerned with five research questions and these questions guided the research project as well as the data analysis and reporting process. The questions were:

1. What is the balance of curriculum content experienced by young adults with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
2. What are the direct and indirect consequences of this experienced curriculum balance on lives of individuals with visual impairments as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
3. What is the ‘ideal’ curriculum balance which should be available for students with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
4. What are the barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum for students with visual impairments in Turkey as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?
5. What other factors influence the independence of individuals with visual impairments (other than the ECC and associated teaching) as perceived by young adults with visual impairments and educators?

Each of these research questions is now answered briefly to bring overall strands together.

7.2.1 What is the balance of the curriculum content experienced by young adults with visual impairments?

There was a strong view from both educators and young adults with visual impairments regarding the low level of attention given to additional aspects of the curriculum, specifically the ECC and an over-emphasis on academic subjects across the education system.

Specifically regarding schools for the blind, although some individuals with a visual impairment and educators referred to the existence of additional training in a few areas of the ECC, none of the participants described a satisfactory level of education and preparedness to be independent. However, the educators were more positive regarding the experienced curriculum balance than young adults with a visual impairment. This finding highlighted a discrepancy between what the professionals working with people with visual impairments considered to be a suitable service and what people with visual impairments themselves deemed to be suitable.

Although the attention to ECC at schools for the blind was considered to be quite negative, it still appeared to be better than that offered at mainstream schools, as there was no reported direct ECC-training at mainstream schools. Educators confirmed that this was generally the case across the country. This is not a surprise when policy documents relating to education of students with special needs in Turkey are considered; these documents include an expectation that all students who do not have severe intellectual disabilities can learn to be independent via incidental learning. Yet this view misses the additional needs of students with a visual impairment and means that the national curriculum does not contain a notion of an additional curriculum for able students with a visual impairment.

On the other hand, as illustrated in chapters 5 and 6, it appears that the training reportedly delivered on ECC at the Parıltı Private Special Education Centre (PSEC) seemed to be more than both schools for the blind and mainstream schools combined, yet it was still far from meeting the needs of individuals with a visual impairment. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that only one PSEC was included in the study and this PSEC is not representative of others.

In addition to poor ECC education, the majority of participants with a visual impairment shared serious concerns about receiving instruction on the national curriculum, as did the educators. Some curriculum content was simply not taught to students with visual impairments in schools for the blind as it was considered too complex in relation to the limited materials and limited knowledge and expertise of the educators. This was not the case in the mainstream schools where the curriculum content was followed more rigidly. Conversely, the adjustments and accommodations to the presentation of the teaching material offered at schools for the blind (e.g. presenting in Braille) was non-existent in mainstream schools. Therefore, although the national curriculum is offered more rigidly at mainstream schools than in schools for the blind, it is not offered in an accessible manner. This raises a dilemma regarding which placement would be suitable for students with a visual impairment. Norwich (2008, 2013) conceptualised "dilemma" as the existence of at least two choices – and neither being desirable. This study illustrated that neither schools for the blind nor mainstream schools were suitable for access to both the academic curriculum and ECC simultaneously. In short, the existing education system seems to fail at offering a broad and balanced curriculum, whatever the educational setting, because it fails to offer disability-specific curriculum areas (as exemplified by the ECC), and it commonly fails to make the national curriculum accessible to students with a visual impairment.

7.2.2 What are the direct and indirect consequences of the experienced balance of the curriculum content on the lives of individuals with visual impairments?

As illustrated and discussed in chapters 4, 5 and 6, due to a poor curriculum balance – linked to not paying attention to the additional curriculum and over-emphasising the academic curriculum – participants identified several negative consequences upon the everyday life of individuals with a visual impairment. Even though the study could not offer a definite causal link between the lack of ECC training and reported challenges, it strongly suggested that without such training and associated skills, individuals with a visual impairment experience significant difficulties in every domain of their lives. The findings of this research support the existing literature on this subject (e.g. McDonnall, 2011; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010; Wolffe & Kelly, 2011). As noted in chapters 4 and 5, the most frequently mentioned challenges among the participants were:

- developmental implications (from early years: e.g. intellectual development, psycho-motor development, social development);
- negative schooling experiences and outcomes (including lower attainment);

- everyday life (remaining dependent on others, isolation, psychological challenges);
- employment (not finding appropriate employment or remaining dependent on their colleagues).

In turn, all of these consequences lead to negative portrayals and expectations of people with a visual impairment. Challenges experienced from an early age continued into the rest of their lives in a self-fulfilling manner. For instance, due to not having the skills to get around independently and develop social skills, people with a visual impairment experienced difficulty in participating in social activities. By not participating in social gatherings they could not establish healthy friendships and felt isolated and experienced psychological and emotional challenges.

Moreover, it appears that there are nuances and differences among the sub-layers of the population of people with a visual impairment regarding experienced challenges. Although each case should be considered separately (because each individual has a different personality, upbringing, parents and wider social networks, as illustrated and discussed in chapters 4, 5 and 6) two sub-groups among people with a visual impairment – "females with a visual impairment" and "participants with a more severe visual impairment" – faced the most significant challenges and became the most marginalised. For instance, when there was no ECC training, totally blind individuals seemed to experience more significant challenges in their everyday lives than individuals with some useful vision. Simply put, when no training on the ECC was received, individuals with useful vision were nevertheless able to use that vision to undertake some tasks, and this led them to experience fewer challenges than their totally blind counterparts. Similarly, due to cultural practices, females with visual impairments were left to face more severe challenges than their male counterparts. Female participants with total blindness presented the most distressing cases among the participants because they were the ones who were strictly prohibited from doing a variety of tasks in everyday life (e.g. leaving their homes). In summary, due to not receiving ECC training, and because of various social-environmental and cultural factors, individuals with a visual impairment face several different challenges in their everyday lives.

Finally, when the consequences of the experienced curriculum balance are examined, it could be said that not receiving appropriate training in ECC skills influences not only the personal life of individuals with a visual impairment but also society itself (it assists in developing bias). Simply, the individual has an influence on their society and society has an

influence on the personal life of individuals. Therefore, individuals with a visual impairment who did not receive proper training and master the ECC face challenges in their personal lives due to not having the skills (and environmental barriers), but when these challenges interacted with the wider society they acquired an even greater influence and projected them in return.

7.2.3 What is the 'ideal' balance of curriculum which should be available to students with visual impairments?

All participants commented on a positive relationship between the ECC and independence. It is unsurprising then, that when asked about an ideal curriculum balance, all advised that more time should be spent teaching ECC skills to students with a visual impairment. Nevertheless, the data did not offer enough evidence to suggest what an 'ideal' curriculum balance should be. The research purely revealed that little ECC education is available for students, and the stakeholders interviewed (people with a visual impairment and educators) had little engagement with the subtleties of "balance".

Even though participants asked for more training on ECC to prepare them as fully independent individuals capable of meeting their own needs, there are nuances in terms of what might be considered "ideal". For instance, although the majority of the participants asked for more ECC training, they still stressed the value of the national curriculum. Against this, six individuals with a visual impairment and only three educators advocated that instruction on ECC components must be prioritised over the academic curriculum so that students could be better prepared for life. This suggests to me that this requires a great deal of thought and should not be based upon emotive responses to a general dissatisfaction with the current situation. The idea that the ECC should be given more attention than the core curriculum sounds extremely worrying. It is worryingly reminiscent of an era in which those with disabilities were excluded from the general curriculum and just taught "suitable" activities such as how to be a telephone operator or basket weavers.

One educator (Lutfu) stated that students should receive ECC training based on their genders and roles in society and that appears to be linked to his value system. These findings suggest the existence of a "dilemma of differences" (Norwich, 2013). Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton and Radley (1988, p.163) explain that dilemmas arise from a "culture which produces more than one possible ideal world". Based on the findings, it seemed that different people in Turkey have different expectations from their lives. Central to

Norwich (2013)'s "theoretical position is how inclusive education must navigate education systems that contain dilemmas: most notably education systems that treat people the same on one hand (but might be insensitive to their differences) and respond to people's difference on the other (which might stigmatise and hinder them on that basis" (Douglas, McLinden, Robertson, Travers, & Smith, 2015, p.100). Participants of this study suggested different curriculum balances based on their own world views and this makes it difficult to navigate around the "dilemma of differences" and suggest an appropriate balance. Yet, when navigating all dilemmas, we must try to find a balance by embracing the positive (treating with equality but being sensitive to difference), and removing the negative (insensitivity and stigmatisation). Therefore, this might be seen as an important finding in itself, suggesting as it does that there is no single "ideal" for all children. Rather, it is personalised and dependent on individual needs, culture and aspirations. This suggests a need for "personalised learning pathways" for each individual with a visual impairment rather than ignoring individual differences and unique requirements and adopting a cumulative educational approach. In section "6.4. The ideal curriculum balance", I tried to outline a template regarding how the ECC could be taught within Turkish education system without any major sacrifice to the academic curriculum. This template could be modified and updated based on each individual's needs for accessing an appropriate curriculum balance.

7.2.4 What are the barriers to and enablers for the implementation of a balanced curriculum for students with visual impairments?

As illustrated in chapters 4, 5 and 6, both participants from Study 1 and Study 2 raised several different factors as barriers and enablers to achieving an appropriate curriculum balance. The most important barriers broadly include:

- "The family": family was seen as a source of poor ECC training because they push for and value academic training when ECC training could be delivered.
- "The quantity of educators": there is a critical shortage of qualified TSVIs and where there are most are not used in a useful way. Due to this shortage in qualified TSVIs, teachers without qualifications are often transferred to teach students with visual impairments.
- "The quality of educators": the TSVI preparation programme seems unable to equip teacher candidates with necessary skills, especially, in adapting and delivering the academic curriculum in an accessible fashion and delivering ECC instruction without compromising the academic curriculum.

- “Attitudes of educators”: due to issues with accepting less than ideal teacher candidates to teacher preparation programmes and issues with placing teachers, people who are not interested in teaching students with visual impairment and/or ones who have no expectations of students with visual impairment end up teaching them. As a result, these teachers may have inappropriate attitudes toward students with visual impairment and the ECC; consequently, they may not be willing to teach the ECC and promote independence.
- “The non-recognition of ECC within the national curriculum”: the national curriculum is too rigid and does not accommodate the ECC; therefore, there is no allocation of time/targets to teach the ECC.
- “The shortage of educational materials and facilities”: the lack of appropriate educational materials such as canes and PCs, and poor school facilities, such as no kitchens, were barriers to teaching the ECC.
- “A lack of vision and transition services”: students (and teachers) at mainstream schools were left alone without any support to meet their unique needs.
- “A lack of implementation of legislation”: the level of legislation governing special education is at a similar level to that of more developed countries, yet there are serious issues with implementation.

As can be seen, reported barriers were not only obstacles in achieving an appropriate curriculum balance but they also presented challenges at a wider level, including teaching basic academic skills. It needs to be stressed that a major causal factor of these challenges is a lack of a conceptual framework (common language/vocabulary) to discuss and capture individuals’ unique needs. As illustrated in chapters 4, 5 and 6, before this research project, participants were not aware of any additional curriculum framework similar to the ECC. It was the interview schedule which introduced them to the necessary language and concepts to elaborate and reflect on the unique educational needs of individuals with a visual impairment. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the interviews were liberating for them and enabled them to recognise – or at least be able to articulate – the problems associated with education of individuals with a visual impairment. Moreover, as presented in chapter 5, as a consequence of this liberation, some educators expressed their willingness to change their practices by implementing more ECC training in their everyday teaching. To sum up, this study illustrated that the Turkish education system and the notion of how children are included has serious issues which need to be dealt with; dealing with these systematic

issues would create a more appropriate educational environment to deliver both academic and ECC training.

7.2.5 What other barriers to and enablers for independence exist (which are beyond the ECC and associated teaching)?

As discussed earlier in chapters 4, 5 and 6, educators and individuals with a visual impairment reported that the main barrier to independence is a lack of preparedness due to an inappropriate curriculum balance (more specifically, a shortage of appropriate training on the ECC). However, the data also suggests that there are some barriers to independence which fall beyond the scope of the ECC as originally defined in this research. These could be defined as individually-based explanations (e.g. remaining vision, internal motivation, fear) and socially (environmental) based explanations (e.g. physical barriers, cultural values). Initially, it can be said that the ECC considers the individual with a visual impairment as a source of challenges and aims to equip the individual with the necessary skills to integrate them in everyday life. Yet, this study illustrates that although some challenges are due to an individual's characteristics (e.g. fear, having no useful sight), there are other socially-based factors that extend beyond the ECC scope and have negative impacts on their independence (e.g. physical barriers, over-protectiveness).

A significant socially-based barrier is the attitudes of people about individuals with a visual impairment. Because Turkish culture embraces over-protectiveness toward vulnerable groups, (e.g. females, individuals with a disability), family members, educators, and people encountered on the street present challenges to independence for individuals with a visual impairment. Underpinning cultural attitudes are issues of tradition and training and expertise within Turkey.

Other factors influencing the independence of people with a visual impairment included physical challenges (e.g. poor pavements) and lack of accommodations (e.g. no audio systems on buses and no assistive technology in the work place). Because of this, even if individuals with a visual impairment have the necessary skills to be independent they will still face challenges in their everyday life. These findings illustrate the existence of barriers that extend beyond the individual model of disability's assertion that the person is the source of challenges for participating in everyday life. Therefore, I suggest a redefining of medical and social models of disability. The new approach I am suggesting fits into a complex system with the individual with a visual impairment placed at the centre but with multiple layers of

interconnected factors. In the next section of this chapter, I provide recommendations on how to provide a balanced curriculum and promote independence of individuals with a visual impairment by using this framework.

7.3 Contribution

Within this section, I briefly discuss the contribution of this research study to “methodology”, “theory” and “practice”.

7.3.1 Contribution to methodology

As a person with a visual impairment myself, investigating barriers and enablers encountered by individuals with a visual impairment is a unique element of this thesis. Firstly, because of my own experience, I was aware of some of the issues, even before the research took place. Although I encountered surprises (e.g. I too expected more ECC-related training to be carried out at schools for the blind), this familiarity with the phenomena enabled me to ask appropriate questions and create effective data collection tool and protocols to generate rich and useful data. Furthermore, being a visually-impaired researcher provided me with a deeper understanding of how to meet participants’ needs and offer the best modifications possible. For instance, in Study 1, I developed both open-ended and close-ended questions. Researchers often choose to ask open-ended questions face-to-face and closed questions in a written questionnaire. However, since all participants were visually impaired, and would therefore encounter challenges when accessing traditional printed materials, I decided to ask both types of question in face-to-face interviews. This turned out to be a very effective strategy gathering the data without stressing the participants. Moreover, since I had extensive experience of the Turkish education system (both as a student with a visual impairment and when I worked as a teacher), I had a chance to add another level of content validity to the collected data.

Lastly, during the course of my research, I discovered that most data analysing methods (including software packages such as Nvivo, AtlasIT, etc.) were not fully accessible for people with sight limitations. The same was true for software packages designed to help organise references (EndNote, Refwork etc.). Moreover, even some data analysing strategies which existed before technology (e.g. the use of colourful markers) were also not accessible. Consequently, with the support of my supervisors, I had to consider alternatives. This thesis therefore illustrates how a researcher with a visual impairment could go about

analysing qualitative data by implementing thematic analyses. I wish researchers with a visual impairment could be offered accessible versions of relevant software and could be offered necessary training. However, if this does not happen, I hope a researcher with a visual impairment picks up this thesis and implements step-by-step the strategies I used to deal with their own data. For more details, see “Chapter 3: Methodology”.

7.3.2 Contribution to theory

A significant contribution of this study is the approach offered regarding models of disability. In light of the findings, I am persuaded that an amalgamation of the individual and social models of disability and the Bio-ecological model of human development serves this analysis well – and such a model also better informs the understanding and improvement of the education of people with a visual impairment in Turkey. Here I refer to this emerging model as a “Bio-ecological model of disability”.

As discussed under section “1.1.4. Models of disability and ICF”, according to individual models of disability, the impairments themselves are the main source of the problems associated with a disability (Barnes, 2009, 2012) and people with impairments are labelled “disabled” and considered incomplete or “abnormal”, and incapable of participating in and contributing to the everyday life of the community (Barnes, 2009, 2012; Shakespeare, 2008). In contrast, advocates for the social model of disability argue that the main disabling factor is the environment rather than the impairment itself (Oliver, 2013; Swain & French, 2010).

Nevertheless, as discussed in detail in chapters 4, 5 and earlier in this chapter, educators and young adults with a visual impairment reported that according to them the main barrier to independence was a lack of preparedness of individuals with a visual impairment and environmental barriers. To be more specific, this study illustrated that individuals have specific learning requirements linked to their visual impairment. If they do not receive appropriate training to meet these requirements they experience a great number of challenges when participating in everyday life. In this case, the individual model of disability might seem to be valid. Nevertheless, if individuals with a visual impairment receive training to meet their unique learning requirements and are still facing challenges in their everyday life (e.g. poor pavements) and lack of accommodations (e.g. a lack of audio systems on buses, a lack of assistive technology at the work place), then there are broader factors presenting obstacles in their participation. Clearly, these environmentally-based factors illustrate the existence of barriers beyond the individual model of disability’s assertion that

the person is the source of challenge for participating in everyday life. In this case, the social model of disability would be valid rather than the individual model of disability. This suggests neither individual models of disability nor social models of disability are sufficient alone to understand the experience of disability accurately.

As an example, my own experiences while studying for this degree also illustrate this interactive view. For instance, I found that some data-analysis packages were not accessible for screen readers (e.g. NVivo) whereas some packages were (e.g. “SPSS”, “R”) but I did not have the skills to use them. Simply put, my own experience throughout the research process illustrated that people with a visual impairment might encounter challenges linked to our personal limitations (lack of skills) and/or from environmental factors (e.g. poor accessibility).

After making it clear that some barriers and enablers for independence could be either individually-based or environmentally-based, it is crucial to discuss where the ECC fits into debates about disability theory. In 2001, the WHO published the ICF and introduced a new framework, constructed around a bio-psychosocial model, to describe health and functioning at both individual and population levels (Rouquette, et al., 2015). The ICF attempted to integrate both the individual and social models of disability; as such, it recognised the restrictions of impairment whilst simultaneously acknowledging the impact of social exclusion (Douglas et al., 2012). In the beginning of section “6.6 The barriers to and enablers for independence (beyond ECC and associated teaching)”, I argued that the ECC is born out of the individual model of disability as it aims to equip the individual with necessary skills to be able to participate in society. Nevertheless, the findings led me to reconsider this view – given that ECC requires a social intervention (teaching), ECC could be associated with both the individual model of disability and/or social model of disability.

In early years (when the person with a visual impairment is still a child/teenager) the ECC seems to be a social-enabler as the ECC empowers the individual with the necessary skills to do things independently. Moreover, when students are taught the ECC, the skills become mastered and internalised by the individual – as such ECC skills become individual-factors that support independence rather than social enablers. Likewise, although the ECC is a social enabler during the early years, if students cannot master the skills then a lack of these skills will become individual barriers rather than social barriers to their independence in later years.

As an example, if the school environment is fully accessible but Umut, our hypothetical student, does not know how to get around using a cane or guide dog he cannot be independent. However, the ECC will provide him with the necessary skills so that he can travel independently. In this case, the ECC becomes a social enabler. Furthermore, by offering appropriate training, if Umut masters O&M skills, these internalised skills will become individual factors of his independence rather than social enablers. Keeping with this argument, the ECC example provided above illustrates that over a given period of time individuals and their social environment could be thought of as demonstrating progressive mutual accommodation. Bronfenbrenner (2005, p.107) describes "*progressive, mutual accommodation*" as: "two key determinants of student learning are (1) the characteristics of the learner and the environments in which they exist and (2) the relationships and interconnections between these".

Up to this point I have divided the factors that influence the independence of individuals with visual impairment as either being individually-based or socially-based. By recognising the usefulness of Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological model of human development and the language of disability offered by the ICF, I can divide the socially-based factors that influence human development and independence further. Therefore, a combined 'Bio-ecological model of disability' seems a useful contribution for identifying barriers to and enablers for participation in every layer of the society.

The Bio-ecological model of disability places the individual in the centre and has a number of different layers or systems (like concentric circles) surrounding them. The layers interact and influence each other. In the centre of the circles is the individual with a visual impairment, then their family, schools, educators and other stakeholders/factors make up layers of the environment (see section "4.6.1 The Bio-ecological model of human development" and Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Each layer continually influences the others (Anderson, Boyle, & Deppeler, 2014). As an example, if an individual with visual impairment has no independence skills they will face challenges. Since the systems are dynamic someone who interacts with that person who is struggling will develop some information regarding people with visual impairments and will then use this information in future interactions with other layers/individuals. Likewise, if someone with a visual impairment is very independent people interacting with that person would develop positive attitudes that would influence how they behaved towards other people with visual impairments in the future. This suggests the existence and usefulness of an "interactive model of disability" which recognises and

acknowledges that barriers in the participation of everyday life might be because of both individual and social factors and the interaction within them. Simply put, by a recognition of individually and socially based factors on disability, this fits into a complex system with people with a visual impairment at the centre but with multiple layers of interconnected factors.

It is very important to note that the model I am offering is a draft but it offers a platform for others in the field and for me to take my work forward. To sum up, by blending the ICF and the Bio-ecological model of human development, I could develop a very helpful framework which could be used in identifying both individually-based and socially-based barriers and enablers for independence. The recommendations which follow are presented within this developed theoretical framework.

7.3.3 Contribution to practice

This study illustrates that individuals with a visual impairment require additional education beyond that which is contained in the Turkish national curriculum. The additional requirement mostly occurs because individuals with a visual impairment are not able to access information (McLinden & Douglas, 2014) about their environment as much as their typically-developing peers (Lewis et al., 2014). This access issue, and consequently, limitation, in gathering knowledge from their environment limits their incidental learning (Lieberman et al., 2014b; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). This limited knowledge is magnified when they do not receive any compensatory training (e.g. ECC). This suggests that individuals with a visual impairment ought to be taught additional skills which could be broadly formulated in the ECC (or a similar curriculum). Otherwise, they are very likely to face several challenges in their lives that influence overall life quality (as anticipated by Hatlen, 1996; Lewis et al., 2014; Lieberman et al., 2014a; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Lohmeier, 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010). Therefore, this study recommends the establishment of an appropriate balance between an additional curriculum (e.g. the ECC) and the national curriculum, to prevent any neglect in either curricula, and to make sure individuals with a visual impairment are fully prepared to live their lives to a full extent in Turkey (and across the globe).

Another important contribution of this study is particular to Turkey. As was discussed in chapters 4, 5 and 6, Turkish culture is different to western culture (although both overlap). The approach to independence and gender roles is especially different. For instance, in Turkey, inter-dependence is more valued than independence, which contrast with western

culture. It is also true that females are considered to have different roles, with the expectations and challenges they face in everyday life which are unique to this society. This study offers an important insight into these issues and into the lives of people with a visual impairment in a different part of the world. And although it suggests an additional curriculum – similar to the ECC – should be created in order to meet the needs of individuals with a visual impairment, it recognises that the creation of such a curriculum should take into account the uniqueness of the cultural values of different regions in the world.

Last but not the least, another important aspect of this study is the way in which it provides an opportunity for people with a visual impairment and their educators to be heard by a larger audience. It not only revealed the challenges faced by people with a visual impairment with regard to education and preparation for independence and projected these voices to bigger audience, but it also sought participants' suggestions on how to deal with the situation. Along with these suggestions, I have provided some recommendations below that I derived from the data analyses, my work and personal schooling in Turkey, the USA, and England.

7.4 Recommendations

In making the recommendations I draw on the "Bio-ecological model of disability" which has appeared throughout the research project but is discussed in detail under section "7.3.2. The contribution to theory". First, I offer my recommendations regarding the individual and then progress to microsystems, exosystems, and macrosystems. It is also important to note that the recommendations I offer below are keeping with strategies I offered in section "6.4 The 'ideal' curriculum balance". Finally, these recommendations I offer below are in many ways a draft but I wish to offer a platform for others in the field, and for me, to take my work forward.

7.4.1 Recommendations regarding the individual

Participants consistently stated that fear, joy of success, courage, any remaining vision, internal motivation, self-teaching, and negative experiences are crucial individual factors to their independence. It is clear that all these factors interact with each other. For example, if a child has courage and achieves something independently, s/he will feel the joy of success which will encourage performance of other tasks. But if a child has a negative experience, this will cause developmental fear and inhibit their burgeoning independence. Therefore, I recommend that the individual is provided with a safe environment and encouraged to interact with it so that they can move around and explore, learn and interact. If this could be

provided from an early point in life, it would contribute as an individual enabler but if it does not happen, it will contribute to individually-based barriers for independence.

Moreover, participants consistently referred to a lack of services for individuals with a visual impairment. There was a strong view that in order to promote independence of individuals with visual impairments, they should be able to receive instruction on ECC areas from their early years. Furthermore, educational support services (e.g. accommodation, offering instruction and guidance) should be implemented in nursery, primary, middle and secondary schools (as well as in adulthood if needed) including people with a visual impairment who have an additional disability. If they received such support and training, it is highly likely they would be comfortable with their own visual impairment and be able to self-advocate for necessary accommodations and modifications when required. This ability is known to enhance the independence of individuals with a visual impairment (Lieberman et al., 2014a; Lieberman et al., 2014b) and also helps people in society to develop a better image of people with a visual impairment.

Below, I offer recommendations regarding the microsystem, the smallest circle in which the child is embedded, which is made up of the environment where the child lives and moves.

7.4.2 Recommendations regarding the family

As discussed in chapters 5 and 6, although parents could not and should not teach all areas of the ECC (because some – e.g. O&M – require specialist instruction), nine educators said that parents should be educated so that they could teach ECC to their children. Indeed, with the acceptance of the belief that most areas should be taught by a specialist, it is valuable to train parents so that they can complement the skills taught by the specialists (Lewis et al., 2014; Lieberman et al., 2014a; Lieberman et al., 2014b; Lohmeier et al., 2009; Sapp & Hatlen, 2010).

Training the parents is not only important with regard to teaching the skills but also in that it helps make sure that they enable their children to interact with and learn about their environment (which also contributes to individual development, see section “7.4.1. The recommendation regarding the individual”). Such parenting approaches would ensure that children with a visual impairment have sufficient life experience before they start school. Furthermore, if parents were educated, they could also advocate for ECC training when it is needed and make sure that their children practise these skills at home. Bearing this in mind,

parents should have access to support services on an ongoing basis, starting from early years, so that they can increase their knowledge regarding their children's needs.

7.4.3 Recommendations regarding educators

As discussed in chapters 4, 5 and 6, several concerns were raised regarding educators. A shortage of qualified TSVIs was frequently raised as a criticism. Increasing the number of properly trained vision specialists is crucial. In order to prepare these educators, the establishment of new teacher preparation programmes is recommended. Some measures that could be taken to increase the number and quality of educators are:

- Teacher candidates should be selected not only on their test scores but for their motivation to teach etc. Therefore, interviews or other measurements should be taken to make sure candidates are not electing to be a teacher only because their test scores do not allow them to get into to a different career or that they assume teaching leads to easy employment (see Eskicumalı 2002; Ubuz & Sarı 2009; Özsoy et al., 2010).
- Teacher preparation programmes should equip teacher candidates with ECC skills and other crucial knowledge needed to teach students with a visual impairment (see Sapp & Hatlen 2010).
- The professional standards for TSVIs should be updated to cover all areas of the ECC and make it clear that teaching these skills is part of their role (see Ferrell & Spungin, 2007; Kesiktaş & Akçamete, 2011).
- Teachers who are in work should be offered effective in-service training regarding the requirements of students with a visual impairment.

Lastly, the above applies not only to vision specialists, but also to other professionals in Turkish schools. Moreover, the establishment of programmes to prepare other specialists who are crucial for education (e.g. para-educators, itinerant teachers, O&M specialists, family specialists) is anticipated to contribute considerably to achieving an appropriate curriculum balance and promoting independence.

In addition to increasing the number of specialists, it is crucial to use the existing TSVIs in a more productive manner. For example, TSVIs who are serving in RAMs doing assessments and paperwork should be directed to serve students with visual impairments directly rather

than their current work. Furthermore, existing itinerant teachers should be used to their maximum potential rather than serving as teaching assistants (see chapters 5 and 6).

7.4.4 Recommendations regarding the school and curriculum

Turkish law and policy does not suggest that the education of children with special needs involves any additional curriculum similar to the ECC for able students with a visual impairment. As a consequence, the curriculum and timetables are reported to be a major barrier in achieving an appropriate curriculum balance, because the curriculum was too rigid and did not include ECC time (see section “6.5.3. The national curriculum and the ECC”). In order to achieve a more appropriate curriculum balance, it is recommended that the national curriculum be modified. With this modification, a broad “Independence and personal development” aspect should be introduced which offers schools and teachers flexibility to build up personal curriculum plans for individuals, including how this can be implemented across the curriculum and outside school. This would give a natural place to include the ECC, and other disability-specific curriculum areas for both students with a visual impairment and other needs without compromising academic subjects. Furthermore, schools should offer an accessible environment whereby students can move, explore and learn from their environment easily as well as practise their ECC skills. Lastly, all education-system stakeholders e.g. classroom teachers, itinerant TSVIs, PSECs, should communicate well to make sure that all ECC skills are taught and that students are given enough opportunities to practise these skills so that they can master them.

7.4.5 Recommendations regarding the physical environment

As reported under the “Barriers to and enablers for teaching the ECC” sections in chapters 4, 5 and 6, participants thought that schools serving students with a visual impairment did not have proper facilities or materials to teach either the ECC or the academic curriculum. The participants stated that schools and PSECs should be provided with appropriate facilities (e.g. a kitchen) and educational materials (Braille materials, canes, and assistive technology) to deliver training both in academic skills and the ECC.

Environmental barriers were reported as being an obstacle not only to delivering the ECC training, but also in establishing an independent life. Physical barriers were reported to hinder the independence of individuals both within and beyond school (e.g. inaccessible traffic lights, inaccessible public transportation, and poor pavements). Therefore, arranging

the environment to be accessible is as crucial as equipping individuals with the necessary skills. Furthermore, both the participants and the literature suggested that there are no assistive technology services in place for employees (or for ones who are looking for employment) with a visual impairment. Therefore, a service which would offer the necessary assistive technology tools and instruction on how to use them should be created so that individuals can receive support when required.

7.4.6 Recommendations regarding special education policy and legislation

This recommendation relates to the exosystems, i.e. the wider context as it relates to the broader community in which the child lives. Although the child may not have direct contact, these systems affect a person's development and functionality – as do all systems.

As reported under "The barriers to and enablers for teaching ECC" (chapters 5 and 6), special education is controlled by several different authorities within the Ministry of National Education and different school types deliver training without communicating with each other. On some occasions, even though multiple institutions delivered intensive training in academic skills, either no training or very little training was being delivered on the ECC. Furthermore, as discussed in chapters 5 and 6, it was reported that a PSEC was teaching the ECC by going beyond its role description. According to the policy document regarding PSECs (e.g. Özel Egitim Destek Programi: Special education support programme, 2004), PSECs should only spend one third of their time teaching "independent living skills", the only area included from the ECC, and two thirds of their time should be used to teach the academic curriculum – subjects already taught at schools. Consequently, I recommend that PSECs should only focus on ECC training (and offer peripatetic services to schools to deal with the ECC), whereas schools should focus more on the academic curriculum.

Moreover, as was discussed in chapters 4, 5 and 6, despite Turkey having a sophisticated special education legislation, its poor implementation is a serious issue. Especially, early intervention, IEPs and transition services did not seem to be working properly. Participants with visual impairment recommended that the authorities should establish clear guidelines and follow the implementation of these laws and policy documents rigidly by using sanctions (when needed) to promote curriculum balance and independence.

7.4.7 Recommendations regarding the ECC

This recommendation is also related to the exosystem, yet it has crucial implications to all smaller circles.

The most crucial recommendation is the need to develop a common language whereby the educational requirement of individuals with a visual impairment and challenges associated with both their education and everyday life can be conceptualised. As made clear in chapter 4, chapter 5, and earlier in this chapter, in the Turkish context there is a lack of common language to describe the notion of an additional curriculum (like the ECC). Due to this lack of common language, stakeholders in the education system find it difficult to consider the unique needs of individuals with a visual impairment. Teachers did not know what they were not teaching, likewise, individuals with visual impairments did not know the gaps in their education before the interviews took place. Therefore, developing a curriculum similar to the ECC whilst considering the unique conditions and needs of Turkey is crucial not only for teaching the necessary skills but also for providing the necessary language for stakeholders of the education system (e.g. policy makers, educators, parents and individuals with a visual impairment themselves) to be able to reflect on unique needs of students with a visual impairment.

7.4.8 Recommendations regarding the society

This section provides recommendations regarding the macrosystem which contains the attitudes and ideologies, values, laws and customs of a particular culture or subculture.

As was reported in chapters 4, 5 and 6, participants had several criticisms about the “role of society” with regard to their independence. All participants suffered from society’s prejudices, negative reactions and lack of awareness and knowledge of people with a visual impairment. Consequently, they stressed the need to educate and change societal views of disability and gender. Some recommendations were to include disability awareness topics and activities in the national curriculum for all students, and to educate society via the media about how they should approach a person with a visual impairment. In addition, promoting interaction with adequately prepared individuals with a visual impairment was anticipated to increase society’s awareness of the condition. Lastly, integrating religious leaders in the process to inform society regarding people with a disability could be an effective strategy to reduce bias toward people with visual impairments and other exceptionalities

7.5 Final reflections

7.5.1 The strengths and limitations of the study

Firstly, it was a very powerful advantage to be familiar with the investigated phenomena. As discussed in the methodology chapter, despite the view that being close to participants might create contamination, this study revealed that the researcher could ask sensitive questions and generate powerful data thanks to being familiar with issues that were faced by both participants with a visual impairment and educators. Furthermore, three of the participants made it clear that they would not have felt comfortable sharing their negative experiences with someone who they felt to be stranger due to a fear of misrepresenting their country. As I was someone with a visual impairment from their country, I believe individuals with a visual impairment felt connected with me and disclosed very sensitive views and experiences that they might not have otherwise been disclosed. Likewise, since I had teacher training and used to work as a teacher, the educators felt connected and did not hesitate to speak about their internal world. In addition, my personal experience with the culture and the education system allowed me to reach a deeper interpretation and check validity of the responses through my own lenses.

The cross-sectional research design combined with an inductive approach – which enabled the gathering and comparison of experiential data from both young adults with a visual impairment and educators who serve students with visual impairments – was a very effective strategy in making sense of what is happening in the field. A mixed method (predominantly qualitative with some quantitative) research approach was implemented in gathering data as "it facilitated the collection of richer data, greater density of information, more vivid description and deeper clarity of meaning" (Palmer, 2005, p.923) than can generally be acquired through quantitative measures. The choice of the data collection design was dictated by the low incidence of severe vision impairment, time, distance, and funding as well as my skills and abilities.

The focus of this study was on a small group of young adults with visual impairments and educators. Young adults that represented different genders, school placements, vision conditions and living situations were included. Similarly, educators from diverse backgrounds and employment were also included. Nevertheless, the participants only provided a snapshot of the pupils who attended schools for the blind and mainstream schools. Also the educators who were serving individuals with visual impairments were mainly employed at segregated

institutions, with the exception of an itinerant teacher; there were no participants who served students with a visual impairment in a mainstream school. In short, despite much effort being taken to include individuals from different sections of the research population, it needs to be acknowledged that the sample size was small and may lead to limitations in terms of being able to make generalisations beyond the research study. Nevertheless, given that participants were from settings/institutions in different parts of Turkey and their rich and independent stories complemented one another, the findings from this study have a strong face validity which hopefully has relevance and credibility across Turkey.

It must also be remembered that a weakness of the study might be my own personal experiences and values. Since, as researchers, we observe the studied phenomena through our own worldview lenses, and represent reality through these lenses, researchers from a different background may find slightly different results due to a different interpretation of the data. Furthermore, whilst experiences of participants were gathered, they were gathered through participants' lenses, and it was limited to what they thought they had experienced. I could only interpret these experiences as far as my understanding would take me and through my own lenses (world view). Nevertheless, since a number of quotes were used to illustrate themes and all steps of the analysis were declared explicitly throughout the research, I feel comfortable about my interpretations and conclusions and offer them with openness and the acceptance that others may come to different conclusions. For me this is part of the process, and if my work generates constructive debate and change then one of my aims has been achieved.

7.5.2 Recommendations for future studies

This study revealed several matters that would benefit from deeper investigation. Some of these issues include:

- A detailed study regarding the number of students with visual impairments and their placements across Turkey;
- A detailed study to identify existing and missing educational materials and facilities of schools for students with a visual impairment in Turkey;
- Issues in teacher preparation programmes and placements of teachers;
- Issues in implementation of legislation: the reasons underpinning the lack of implementing legislation;
- Influence of the disability quota in employment and society;
- A similar study needs to be conducted in rural areas of Turkey;

- Experiences of people with a visual impairment who have an additional disability should also be sought;
- In addition, the findings of this study could be tested across the country with a larger sample size.

References

Abdullah, Z., & Mansor, N. (2012). Entrepreneurial opportunities among visually impaired. *Academic Research International*, *2*(3), 575.

Abou-Zeid, A. (1974). Honor and shame among Bedouins of Egypt. In J. G. Peristiany (Ed.), *Honor and shame: The values of Mediterranean society* (pp. 243-260). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Act no 573, law on special education [573 Sayılı özel eğitim hakkında kanun hükmünde kararname]. (1997). Resmi Gazete, Haziran, Ankara, (23011).

Act no. 1739 regarding Turkish education [Milli eğitim temel kanunu]. (1973) Ankara: Resmi gazete

Act no. 2916 regarding children with special needs [2916 sayılı Özel Eğitime Muhtaç Çocuklar Kanunu]. (1983) *Ankara: Resmi Gazete 5* (22), 679

Agran, M., Hong, S., & Blankenship, K. (2007). Promoting the self-determination of students with visual impairments: Reducing the gap between knowledge and practice. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness,101*(8), 453.

Akçamete, G. (2002). Türkiye'de özel eğitim öğretmeni yetiştirme İle ilgili sorunlar ve çözüm önerileri (Issues in special education teacher preparation and solutions in turkey). *XI Ulusal özel eğitim kongresi bildirileri* [*The 11th National Special Education Symposium*].p.23-31. Konya: *Eğitim Kitapevi Yayınları*... [in Turkish]

Akçamete, G. (2009). Özel gereksinimi olan çocuklar [Children with special needs]. In G. Akçamete (Ed.), *Genel Eğitim Okullarında Özel Gereksinimi olan çocuklar* [*Children with special needs at mainstream schools*], (pp. 31-74). Ankara: Kök Yayıncılık. [In Turkish]

Akçamete, G., Kaner, S., & Sucuoğlu, B. (2001). *Öğretmenlerde tükenmişlik, iş doyumu ve kişilik* [*Burnout, job satisfaction and personality of teachers*]. Ankara: Nobel Yayınevi. [In Turkish]

Akgün, E., Yılmaz, E. O., & Seferoğlu, S. S. (2011). Vizyon 2023 strateji belgesi ve fırsatları artırma ve teknolojiyi iyileştirme hareketi (FATİH) projesi: Karşılaştırmalı bir inceleme (A comparative study: The 2023 Vision strategy document and the increase of opportunities it provides and the movement in technological advances as the FATİH project). *Akademik Bilişim* (*Academic Knowledge*). 2-4.

Akkok, F. (2000). Special education research: A Turkish perspective. *Exceptionality, 8*(4), 273-279.

Akkök, F. (2001). The past, present, and future of special education: the Turkish perspective, *Mediterranean Journal of Educational Studies, 6*(2), 15–22.

Akkök, F., & Zelloth, H. (2010). *Lifelong Guidance–a feasible policy option for Turkey*. Ankara: ISKUR Dökümanlari.

Akyüz, H. E., & Kaya, H. (2014). A study on the burnout level of primary school teachers, *Journal of International Social Research, 7*(34).

Al-Aoufi, H., Al-Zyoud, N., & Shahminan, N. (2012). Islam and the cultural conceptualisation of disability. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, *17*(4), 205-219.

Alasuutari, P. (1995). *Researching Culture: Qualitative Method and Cultural Studies.* London: SAGE Publications.

Allan, J., (2008). *Rethinking inclusive education: The philosophers of difference in practice* (Vol. 5). Springer Science & Business Media.

Allman, C.B., & Lewis, S. (2014). A strong foundation: The importance of the expanded core curriculum. In C. B. Allman, , & S. Lewis, (Eds.), *ECC essentials: Teaching the expanded core curriculum to students with visual impairments* (pp.15-30). New York: American Foundation for the Blind Press.

Al-Qahtani, S. (1989). Fortress of the Muslim: Innovations from the Qur'an and Sunnah (36th ed.). Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: The Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments Da'wah and Guidance.

Altunay-Arslantekin, B. (2015) The evaluation of visually impaired students' mobility skills. *Eğitim ve Bilim* (*Education and Science Journal Online*)*, 40*(180), 37–49. Retrieved on December 3, 2015, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281165330_The_Evaluation_of_Visually_Impaired_Students'_Mobility_Skills

Anderson, J., Boyle, C., & Deppeler, J. (2014). The ecology of inclusive education: Reconceptualising Bronfenbrenner. In H. Zhang, P. Wing, K. Chan, & C. Boyle (Eds.), *Equality in education: Fairness and inclusion* (pp. 23–34). Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Anthony, T. L., Bleier, H., Fazzi, D. L., Kish, D., & Pogrund, R. L. (2002). Mobility focus: Developing early skills for orientation and mobility. In R. Pogrund & D. Fazzi (Eds.), *Early focus: Working with young children who are blind or visually impaired and their families,* (2nd ed., pp. 326-355). New York: AFB Press.

Arat, G., Icagasıoğlu-Coban, A., & Polat, G. (2013). Social capital formation among Turkish women. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal. 5*(1). 97-108.

Arat, Y. (2001). ‘Gender and Citizenship: Considerations of the Turkish Experience. In S. Joseph & S. Slyomovics (Eds.), *Women and Power in the Middle East* (pp. 159-165). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Arndt, K., Lieberman, L.J., & James, A. (2014). Supporting the Social Lives of Adolescents Who Are Blind: Research to Practice. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas, 87*(2), 69-74.

Arter, C. (2013). *Children with visual impairment in mainstream settings*. London: Routledge.

Arter, C., & Mason, C. (1999). *Children with visual impairments in mainstream settings.* London: David Fulton Publishers.

Aslan, M., & Şeker, Ö. G. S. (2013). Aile içi şiddetin bir boyutu olarak kadına yönelik şiddet toplumsal algıla ve tutumlar (Social perception and attitudes of violence against woman as extent of domestic violence). *Nişantaşı University Journal of Social Sciences, 1* (1).

Ataman, A. 2005. Özel gereksinimli çocuklar ve özel eğitim [Children with special needs and special education]. In A. Ataman , (Ed.), *Özel gereksinimli çocuklar ve özel eğitime giriş* [*Children with Special Needs and Introduction to Special Education*]. Ankara: Gündüz Eğitim ve Yayıncılık. [In Turkish]

Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: an analytic tool for qualitative research. *Qualitative Research, 1*(3), 385-405.

Badr, L. K., Garg, M., & Kamath, M. (2006). Intervention for infants with brain injury: Results of a randomized controlled study. *Infant Behavior and Development, 29*(1), 80-90.

Baer, M. (2010). *Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bakkaloglu, H. (2013). Parental Views on the Transition Process of Children with Special Needs from Early Intervention to Preschool. *Egitim ve Bilim*, *38*(169).

Balta, S., & Bengisu, M. (2012). Employment of the Disabled Workforce in the Hospitality Industry. *BEST Education Network Think Tank VIII: Sustaining Quality of Life through Tourism*.

Barnes, C. (2009). Understanding the social model of disability. Accessed online: [http://www.hso.se/Global/Projekt/Fr%C3%A5n%20forskningsobjekt/Forskning/Anteckningar%20Colin%20Barnes%20091118.pdf]

Barnes, C. (2012). Understanding the social model of disability. *Routledge handbook of disability studies*. Oxon and New York: Routledge.

Barnes, C., & Mercer, G. (2004). *Implementing the social model of disability: Theory and research*. Leeds: Disability Press.

Barraga, N. (1964). *Increased visual behavior in low vision children.* New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

Barton, L., & Armstrong, F. (Eds.). (2007). *Policy, experience and change: cross-cultural reflections on inclusive education* (Vol. 4). Dordrecht: Springer.

Baybars, M. G., & Kocakülah, M. S. (2009). Evaluation of grade 9 physics curriculum based on teacher's views. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences, 1*(11), 1121-1126.

Bayhan, P., & Sipal, R. F. (2011). Early intervention services in Turkey: Perspectives of south-eastern families. *International Social Work, 54*(6), 781-799.

Bayır, Ş., Keser, H., & Numanoğlu, G. (2010). General review on computer literacy of visually handicapped individuals in Turkey. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 9*, 1475-1480.

Bayram, G.I., Corlu, M.S., Aydın, E., Ortaçtepe, D., & Alapala, B. (2015). An exploratory study of visually impaired students' perceptions of inclusive mathematics education. *British Journal of Visual Impairment, 33*(3), 212-219.

Bazna, M. S., & Hatab, T. A. (2005). Disability in the Qur'an: The Islamic alternative to defining, viewing, and relating to disability. *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health, 9*(1), 5-27.

Bell, E. C., & Mino, N. M. (2013). Blind and visually impaired adult rehabilitation and employment survey: Final results. *Journal of Blindness Innovation and Research Online, 3*(1). Retrieved on July 7, 2014, from https://nfb.org/images/nfb/publications/jbir/jbir13/jbir030101abs.html.

Bell, E.C. (2010). Competitive employment for consumers who are legally blind: A 10-year retrospective study. *Journal of Rehabilitation Research & Development, 47*(2), 109-116.

Bengisu, M., & Balta, S. (2011). Employment of the workforce with disabilities in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 19*(1), 35-57.

Bengisu, M., Izbirak, G., & Mackieh, A. (2008). Work-related challenges for individuals who are visually impaired in Turkey. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 102*(5), 284 – 294.

Benoit, C., Jansson, M., Jansenberger, M., & Phillips, R. (2013). Disability stigmatization as a barrier to employment equity for legally-blind Canadians. *Disability & Society, 28*(7), 970-983.

Benzahra, S. A. (2002). *Representations of the disabled in Arab/Islamic culture and literature from North Africa and the Middle East*. PhD dissertation: The University of Minnesota.

Bilgili, N., & Vural, G. (2011). Kadina yönelik şiddetin en ağir biçimi: Namus cinayetleri (The most extreme vıolence agaınst woman: honour kıllıngs). *Journal of Anatolia Nursing and Health Sciences, 14*(1).

Billig, M., Condor, S., Edwards, D., Gane, M., Middleton, D., & Radley, A. (1988). *Ideological dilemmas: A social psychology of everyday thinking.* Sage Publications, Inc.

Bird, C. M. (2005). How I stopped dreading and learned to love transcription. *Qualitative Inquiry, 11*(2), 226-248.

Bishop, D. V. M. (2000). How does the brain learn language? Insights from the study of children with and without language impairment. *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology, 42*(02), 133-142.

Bishop, M., Hobson, R. P., & Lee, A. (2005). Symbolic play in congenitally blind children. *Development and psychopathology*, *17*(02), 447-465.

Bishop, V.E. (2004). *Teaching Visually Impaired Children* (3rd ed.). USA: Charles C. Thomas Publisher.

Black, J.A., & Champion, D.J. (1976). *Methods and issues in social research*. USA: Wiley.

Blaikie, N. (2007). *Approaches to Social Inquiry: Advancing Knowledge.* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Polity.

Blasch, B., Wiener, W., & Welsh, R. (1997). *Foundations to Orientation and Mobility* (2nd ed.). New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming Qualitative Information and code development*. Cleveland: Sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Braun, V., Clarke, V., & Terry, G. (2014). Thematic analysis. In P. Rohelder, & A. C. Lyons (eds.), *Qualitative research in clinical and health psychology*, (pp. 95-114). (n.p.): Palgrave Macmillan.

Brian, A., & Haegele, J. A. (2014) Including students with visual impairments: Softball. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 85*(3), 39-45.

Brisenden, S. (1986). Independent living and the medical model of disability. *Disability, Handicap & Society, 1*(2), 173–178.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by design and nature*. Cambridge, USA: Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). *Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (1998). The ecology of developmental processes. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology, Vol. 1: Theoretical models of human development* (5th ed., pp. 993 -1023). New York: Wiley.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2006). The bioecological model of human development. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds.), *Handbook of child psychology, Vol. 1: Theoretical models of human development* (6th ed., pp. 793-828). New York: Wiley.

Brown, J., & Beamish, W. (2012). The changing role and practice of teachers of students with visual impairments: Practitioners' views from Australia. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 106*(2), 81-92.

Brownell, M. T., Ross, D. D., Colon, E. P., & Mccallum, C. L (2005). Critical features of special education teacher preparation: A comparison with general teacher education. *Journal of Special Education, 38*(4), 242–252.

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bülbül, M. Ş. (2013). Görme engelli öğrenciler ile grafik çalışırken nasıl bir materyal kullanılmalıdır? [What kinds of materials ought to be used with pupils with visual impairments whilst working with graphics?]. *Fen Eğitimi ve Araştırmaları Derneği Fen Bilimleri Öğretimi Dergisi* [*The Journal of the Association of Teaching Science Education and Research*]*, 1*(1), 1-11. [In Turkish]

Bülbül, M.Ş. (2014). *The effect of enriched course materials about motion on ninth grade sighted and totally blind students' achievement, motivation, attitude, perception of learning environment and interaction in inclusive classes* (Doctoral dissertation). Middle East Technical University, Turkey. Retrieved on of December 3, 2014, from http://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/12617351/index.pdf.

Bury, M. (1997). *Health and illness in a changing society*. Psychology Press.

Bury, M. (2000). A comment on the ICIDH2. *Disability and Society, 15*(7), 1073–1077.

Çağlar, D. (2004). Türkiye'de Özel Eğitim Tarihçesi; Özel Eğitimden Yansımalar. [History of special education in Turkey: Reflection on special education]. In A. Konrot (Ed.). *13 Ulusal Özel Eğitim Kongresi Bildirileri.* [*13th national semposiom on special education*]. Ankara: Kök Yayıncılık. [in Turkish]

Cakiroğlu, O., & Melekoğlu, M. A. (2014). Statistical trends and developments within inclusive education in Turkey. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 18*(8), 798-808.

Can, M., & Edirne, T. (2011). Beliefs and attitudes of final-year nursing students on honour crimes: a cross-sectional study. *Journal of psychiatric and mental health nursing, 18*(8), 736-743.

Capella-McDonnall, M. E. (2005). Predictors of competitive employment for blind and visually impaired consumers of vocational rehabilitation services. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 99*(5), 303.

Cavenaugh, B., Giesen, J., & Steinman, B. (2006). Contextual effects of race or ethnicity on acceptance for vocational rehabilitation of consumers who are legally blind. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 100*(7), 425-436.

Cavkaytar, A. (2006). Teacher training on special education in Turkey. *TOJET: The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 5*(3), 41-45.

Çayır, C., & Çetin, Ö. (2011) "Din ve Şiddet Üzerine Psikolojik Bir Yaklaşım" (A psychologıcal analysıs on relıgıon and violence), *Dicle Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, 13*(1), 23-35.

Celeste, M. (2006). Play behaviors and social interactions of a child who is blind: In theory and practice. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 100*(2), 75–90.

Çelik, F. (2013, October-December). *Türkiye'de İstihdamın Görünümü [Appearance of employment in Turkey].* 2(1), 9. [available on: http://app.csgb.gov.tr/cdd/sayi2.pdf#page=10]

Cindoglu, D. (1997, April). Virginity tests and artificial virginity in modern Turkish medicine. *In Women's Studies International Forum, 20*(2), 253-261.

Çitil, M. (2007) *Cumhuriyetin Ilanindan Günümüze Kadar Türkiye'de Özel Eğitim (1923-2007)* [*Special education in Turkey from establishment of the republic to today 1923-2007)*] (Unpublished master's thesis), Gazi University, Turkey.

Clingerman, E. (2006). An insider/outsider team approach in research with migrant farmworker women. *Family and Community Health, 30(*18), 75-84.

Cmar, J. L. (2015). Orientation and mobility skills and outcome expectations as predictors of employment for young adults with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (Online), 109*(2), 95-104.

CNIB. (2005). Employment-related needs of blind and visually impaired working age people in British Columbia, CNIB, Toronto: Canadian National Institute for the Blind.

Coenders, F., Terlouw, C., & Dijkstra, S. (2008). Assessing teachers' beliefs to facilitate the transition to a new chemistry curriculum: What do the teachers want?. Journal of science teacher education, 19(4), 317-335.

Coleridge, P. (2000). Culture and Disability. *Asian Pacific Disability and Rehabilitation Journal: Selected readings in CBR*. January 2000-09-14.

Columna, L., Pyfer, J., Senne, T. A., Velez, L., Bridenthrall, N., & Canabal, M. Y. (2008). Parental expectations of adapted physical educators: A Hispanic perspective. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly, 25*(3), 228-246.

Combres, K., (2007) *Experiences of educated Turkish migrant women returning from Canada*. (Unpublished master's thesis), Middle East Technical University, Turkey.

Conroy, M. A., Alter, P. J., Boyd, B. A., & Bettini, E. (2014). Teacher preparation for students who demonstrate challenging behaviors. *McCray, MT Brownell, & B. Lingnugaris-Kraft (Eds.), Handbook of research on special education teacher preparation.* New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.

Conroy, P. (2012). Supporting students with visual impairments in physical education: Needs of physical educators. *Insight: Research & Practice in Visual Impairment & Blindness, 5*(1).

Conroy, P. (2014). Promoting reflective practices in special education through action research: Recommendations from pre-service teachers. *Networks: On-Line Journal for Teacher Research, 16*(2). Retrieved on December 3, 2014, from http://journals.library.wisc.edu/index.php/networks/issue/view/63

Constitution of the Republic of Turkey (1982) (last amended 2010). Retrieved June 2015, from: http://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf

Cook, R. J., & Dickens, B. M. (2009). Hymen reconstruction: Ethical and legal issues. *International Journal of Gynecology & Obstetrics, 107*(3), 266-269.

Corn, A. L., & Erin, J. N. (2010). *Foundations of low vision: Clinical and functional perspectives*. New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

Corn, A. L., Hatlen, P., Huebner, K. M., Ryan, F., & Siller, M. A. (1995). *The national agenda for the education of children and youths with visual impairments, including those with multiple disabilities.* New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

Corn, A., Erin, J., & Lewis, S. (2003). Strategies used by visually impaired teachers of students with visual impairments to manage the visual demands of their professional role. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (JVIB)*, *97*(03).

Correa-Torres, S., & Howell, J. (2004). Facing the challenges of itinerant teaching: Perspectives and suggestions from the field. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 98*(07).

Council for Exceptional Children. (2009). *What every special educator must know: Ethics, standards, and guidelines* (6th ed.). Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research (2nd ed.)*. London: Sage Publications.

Crudden, A. (2012). Transition to employment for students with visual impairments: Components for success. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 106(5),* 389–399.

Crudden, A., & McBroom, L. W. (1999). Barriers to employment: A survey of employed persons who are visually impaired. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 93*(6), 341-350.

Crudden, A., & McBroom, L. W., (1997). A strategy to improve employment outcomes for persons who are blind or visually impaired. *Lessons for improving employment of people with disabilities from vocational rehabilitation research*, 363-373.

Darensbourg, B. (2013). Predictors of competitive employment of VR consumers with blindness or visual impairments. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 38*(1), 29 - 34.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher quality and student achievement. *Education policy analysis archives*, 8, 1.

Darra, S. (2008). Emotion work and the ethics of novice insider research. *Journal of Research in Nursing, 13*(3), 251-261.

De Vaus, D. (2001). *Research design in social research*. London: Sage.

De Vaus, D. (2008). Comparative and cross-national designs. *The SAGE handbook of social research methods*, 249-264. The SAGE

De Vaus, D. (2013). *Surveys in social research*. London: Routledge.

Delaney, C. (1987). Seeds of honor, fields of shame. In D. D. Gilmore (Ed.), *Honor and shame and the unity of the Mediterranean* (pp. 35-48). Washington, DC: American Anthropological Association.

Demir, T., & Şen, Ü. (2009). Görme Engelli Öğrencilerin Çeşitli Değişkenler Açısından Öğrenme Stilleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma. [An investigation on learning styles of students with a visual impairment] *Journal of International Social Research, 2*(8).

Dickson-Swift, V., James, E., Kippen, S., & Liamputtong Rice, P. (2006). Blurring boundaries in qualitative health research on sensitive topics. *Qualitative Health Research, 16*(6), 853-871.

Diken, I. H. (2004). Öğretmen yeterlik ölçeği Türkçe uyarlaması, geçerlik ve güvernirlik çalışması [Validity and reliability of the Turkish adaptation of the teacher competency scale]. Eurasian Journal of Educational Research (EJER), (16).

Diken, İ. H. (2005). Özel eğitime giriş (introduction to special education). Ankara: Kök Yayıncılık.

Diken, I. H. (2006). Turkish Mothers' Interpretations of the Disability of Their Children with Mental Retardation. *International Journal of Special Education,21*(2), 8-17.

Diken, I. H., Bayhan, P., Turan, F., Sipal, R. F., Sucuoglu, B., Ceber-Bakkaloglu, H., & Kara, O. K. (2012). Early childhood intervention and early childhood special education in Turkey within the scope of the developmental system approach. *Infants & Young Children, 25*(4), 346-353.

Dinnebeil, L. A., McInerney, W., & Hale, L. (2006). 'Shadowing' itinerant ECSE teachers: A descriptive study of itinerant teacher activities. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 21*, 41–52. doi:10.1080/ 02568540609594577

Dodgson, A.B. (2014). *Rehabilitation workers' perspectives of orientation and mobility training with older visually impaired people*. University of Birmingham e-Thesis Repository Online. Retrieved on November 2, 2014, from http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/5078/

Douglas G., Corcoran C., & Pavey S. (2006). *Network 1000. Opinions and circumstances of visually impaired people in Great Britain: Report based on over 1000 interviews.* Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham.

Douglas, G., & Hewett, R. (2014). Views of independence and readiness for employment amongst young people with visual impairment in the UK. *The Australian Journal of Rehabilitation Counselling, 20*(02), 81–99.

Douglas, G., & McLinden, M. (2005) "Visual Impairment". In A. Lewis & B. Norwich (Eds.). *Special Teaching for Special Children? Pedagogies for Inclusion*, Reading: Open University Press.

Douglas, G., Corcoran, C., & Pavey, S. (2007). The role of the WHO ICF as a framework to interpret barriers and to inclusion: visually impaired people's views and experiences of personal computers. *British Journal of Visual Impairment, 25*(1), 32-50.

Douglas, G., McCall, S., McLinden, M., Pavey, S., Ware, J., & Farrell, A. M. (2009). *International review of the literature of evidence of best practice models and outcomes in the education of blind and visually impaired children.* Trim, County Meath: National Council for Special Education.

Douglas, G., McLinden, M., Farrell, A. M., Ware, J., McCall, S., & Pavey, S. (2011). Access to print literacy for children and young people with visual impairment: implications for policy and practice. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 26*(1), 39-46.

Douglas, G., McLinden, M., McCall, S., Pavey, S., Ware, J., & Farrell, A. M. (2011). Access to print literacy for children and young people with visual impairment: findings from a review of literature. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 26*(1), 25-38.

Douglas, G., McLinden, M., Robertson, C., Travers, J., & Smith, E. (2015). Including pupils with special educational needs and disability in national assessment: Comparison of

three country case studies through an inclusive assessment framework. International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 63(1), 98-121.

Douglas, G., Pavey, S., Corcoran, C., & Clements, B. (2012). Evaluating the use of the ICF as a framework for interviewing people with a visual impairment about their mobility and travel. *British Journal of Visual Impairment, 30*(1), 6-21.

Durand, V. M. & Carr, G. (1987). Reducing severe behavior problems among persons with dual sensory impairments: An evaluation of a technical assistance model. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 12*(1), 2-10.

Durkheim, E. (1897/1951). *Suicide: A Study in Sociology.* (J. A. Spaulding & G. Simpson, Trans.). New York: The Free Press of Glenco.

Elliott, R., Fischer, C.T., & Rennie, D.L. (1999). Evolving guidelines for publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 38*(3), 215–229.

Enç, M. (2014) *Bitmeyen Gece* [*Endless night*]; Ankara: Tekışık Matbası, [In Turkish]

Erbas, D., Turan, Y., Aslan, Y. G., & Dunlap, G. (2009). Attributions for problem behavior as described by Turkish teachers of special education. Remedial and Special Education.

Eres, F. (2010). Special Education in Turkey. *US-China Education Review, 7*(4), 94-100.

Ergül, C., Baydık, B., & Demir, Ş. (2013). Opinions of in-service and pre-service special education teachers on the competencies of the undergraduate special education programs. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice, 13*(1), 518–522.

Erickson, W., Lee, C., & von Schrader, S. (2012). *Disability Status Report: United States.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Employment and Disability Institute.

Erin, J. N., Holbrook, C., Sanspree, M. J., & Swallow, R. M. (2006). *Professional preparation and certification of teachers of students with visual impairments*. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Erman, T., Kalaycıoğlu, S., & Rittersberger-Tılıç, H. (2002, August). Money-earning activities and empowerment experiences of rural migrant women in the city: The case of Turkey. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *25*(4), 395-410. Pergamon.

Ersoy, E. (2009). Cinsiyet kültürü içerisinde kadın ve erkek kimliği [The identity of women and men within a gendered culture]. *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* [*The Journal of Social Studies, Fırat University*]*, 19*(2), 209–230.

Esitti, U. F. (2015) *Fatih'te engelliler unutuldu mu?* [*Have people with disabilities been left out of the FATIH project?).* Retrieved from: http://www.kha.com.tr/guncel/11409-Fatih%E2%80%99te-engelliler-unutuldu-mu_.html [In Turkish]

Eskicumalı, A. (2002). *Eğitim, öğretim ve öğretmenlik mesleği. Öğretmenlik Mesleğine Giriş* [*Education, teaching and the teaching profession. Entering the teaching profession].* Özden, Y. [Ed.]. Ankara: Pegem Akademi Yayıncılık. [In Turkish]

Ezzy, D. (2002). *Qualitative Analysis: Practice and Innovation*. London: Routledge.

Farrenkopf, C., & McGregor, D. (2000). Physical education. *Foundations of education: Instructional strategies for teaching children and youths with visual impairments (2nd ed*., Vol. 2, pp. 437-463). New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

Fazzi, D., & Naimy, B. (2010). Teaching orientation and mobility to school-age children. *Foundations of orientation and mobility, (2)*, 208-262. New York: AFB Press.

Feng, L., & Sass, T. R. (2013). What makes special-education teachers special? Teacher training and achievement of students with disabilities. *Economics of Education Review, Elsevier, 36*(C), 122-134.

Ferrell, K. A., & Correa, S. M. (2004). *Field-identified needs in blindness and visual impairment*. Orlando, FL: Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Ferrell, K. A., & Spungin, S. J. (2007). *The role and function of the teacher of students with visual impairments*. Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Visual Impairments.

FitzGerald, K., Seal, S. N., & Kerins, C.A. (2008). The Critical Incident Technique: A Useful Tool for Conducting Qualitative Research. *Journal of Dental Education Online.* Retrieved on 24th July, 2015, from: http://www.jdentaled.org/content/72/3/299.full

Florian, L. (2008). Inclusion: special or inclusive education: future trends. *British Journal of Special Education, 35*(4), 202-208.

Forster, E. M., & Holbrook, M. C. (2005). Implications of paraprofessional supports for students with visual impairments. *RE:view: Rehabilitation Education for Blindness and Visual Impairment, 36*(4), 155.

Friend, M. (2005). *Special education: Contemporary perspectives for school professionals.* Boston: Pearson Education.

Gal, E., Dyck, M. J. & Passmore, A. (2009). The relationship between stereotyped movements and self-injurious behavior in children with developmental or sensory disabilities. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 30*(2), 342–352.

Ghaly, M.M. (2008). Physical and spiritual treatment of disability in Islam: Perspectives of early and modern jurists. *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health, 12***(2)**, 105-143.

Giangreco, M. F., Edelman, S., Luiselli, T. E., & MacFarland, S. Z. C. (1997). Helping or hovering? Effects of instructional assistant proximity on students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 64*(3), 7–18.

Gilbert, N. (1993). *Research, Theory and Method.* In Gilbert, N. (Ed.), *Researching Social Life*. London: Sage Publications.

Gök, G. & Erbaş, D. (2011). Okul öncesi eğitimi öğretmenlerinin kaynaştırma eğitimine ilişkin görüşleri ve önerileri [Early childhood educators' views and recommendations for inclusive education]. *International Journal of Early Childhood Special Education, 3*(1), 66 – 87.

Göl, B. (2014). *Kaynaştırma eğitimi alan görme yetersizliği olan ve gören öğrencilerin akran ilişkilerinin karşılaştırılması (Comparing frıendshıp of students wıth and wıthout a visual impairment who are attendıng to ınclusıve schools).* Gazi University, May 2014 (unpublıshed master's thesis).

Gold, D., & Simson, H. (2005, September). Identifying the needs of people in Canada who are blind or visually impaired: Preliminary results of a nation-wide study. *In International Congress Series (Vol. 1282, pp. 139-142). Elsevier.*

Gold, D., Shaw, A., & Wolffe, K. (2010). The social lives of Canadian youths with visual impairments. *Journal of visual impairment & blindness*, *104*(7), 431.

Golub, D. B. (2006). A model of successful work experience for employees who are visually impaired: The results of a study. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 100*(12), 715 - 725.

Goodley, D. (2011). *Disability studies: An interdisciplinary introduction.* London: Sage.

Goodley, D., & Runswick-Cole, K. (2011). The violence of disablism. *Sociology of health & illness, 33*(4), 602-617.

Goodwin, J. (1994). *Price of honor: Muslim women lift the veil of silence on the Islamic world.* Boston: Little, Brown.

Grafanaki, S. (1996). How research can change the researcher: The need for sensitivity flexibility, and ethical boundaries in conducting qualitative research in counselling/psychotherapy. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, 24*(3), 329-338.

Greeley-Bennett, K. (2014). *Current Issues in the Education of Students with Visual Impairments,* (46), 207. Retrieved on 4 January 2015 from: https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=7UE-AwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false.

Greenstein, A. (2013). Confronting obstacles to inclusion: international responses to developing inclusive education. *Disability & Society, 28*(1), 138-139.

Greenstein, A. (2014). Is this inclusion? Lessons from a very ‘special unit”. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 18*(4), 379-391.

Griffin-Shirley, N., Koenig, A. K., Layton, C. A., & Davidson, R. C. (2004). A survey of teachers of students with visual impairments: Responsibilities, satisfactions, and needs. *RE: view, 36*(1), 7.

Griffin-Shirley, N., McGregor, D., & Jacobson, W. H. (1999). Survey of dual-certified orientation and mobility instructors. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, (93)*, 133-139.

Grimmett, E. S., Pogrund, R. L., & Griffin-Shirley, N. (2011). A national study of parents' perspectives on dual-certified vision professionals. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 105*(4), 211.

Groce, N. (1999). Disability in cross-cultural perspective: Rethinking disability. Lancet, 354, 756-758.

Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research*. In Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y (Eds.), Handbook of Qualitative Research.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Guest, G.S., MacQueen, K.M. & Namey, E.E. (2012). *Applied Thematic Analysis*. London: Sage.

Gül, S. O., & Vuran, S. (2015). Normal Sınıflara Devam Eden Özel Gereksinimli Öğrencilerin Kaynaştırma Uygulamasına İlişkin Görüşleri ve Karşılaştıkları Sorunlar (Views of students wıth special education who are attending a mainstream school regarding inclusion and challenges they face). *Education and Science, 40*(180). [In Turkish]

Güner, O. (2007). İslam Düşüncesinde Kadına Yönelik Şiddet Söylemine Bir Bakış (A look ınto violence against woman in İslamic thoughts) . *Ondokuz Mayıs Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi, 23*(23), 51-63.

Hadidi, M. (1998). Educational programs for children with special needs in Jordan. *Journal of intellectual & Developmental Disability, 23*(2), 147-154.

Haegele, J. A., Lieberman, L. J., Columna, L., & Runyan, M. (2014). Infusing the Expanded Core Curriculum into Physical Education for Children with Visual Impairments. *Palaestra*, 28(3).

Hakim, C. (2000). *Research Design: Successful Designs for Social and Economic Research* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Hakim, C. (2012). *Research Design: Successful Designs for Social Economics Research* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

Hammersley, M. (2007). The issue of quality in qualitative research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 30*(3), 287-305.

Hammersley, M. (2010). *Methodology: Who needs it?*. London: Sage.

Hanushek, E. A., Kain, J. F., Markman, J. M., & Rivkin, S. G. (2003). Does peer ability affect student achievement?. *Journal of applied econometrics, 18*(5), 527-544.

Hasnain, R., Shaikh, L.C., & Shanawani, H. (2008). Disability and the Muslim perspective: An introduction for rehabilitation and health care providers. Center for International Rehabilitation Research Information and Exchange, University at Buffalo, State University of New York. Retrieved December 19, 2014, from http://cirrie.buffalo.edu/culture/monographs/muslim.pdf

Hatlen, P. (1996). The core curriculum for blind and visually impaired students, including those with additional disabilities. *RE:view Online, 28*(1), 25-32. Retrieved on July 4, 2013, from http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ532379

Hatlen, P. (2000). Historical perspectives. In A. J. Koenig & M. C. Holbrook (Eds.), *Foundations of education: Vol. 1. History and theory of teaching children and youths with visual impairments (2nd ed.,* pp. 1-54). New York: AFB Press.

Hatlen, P. (2007). Assisting the visually impaired: From folk art to profession. *AER Report, 24*, 9.

Hatton, D. (2014). Current Issues in the Education of Students with Visual Impairments. In R. M. Hoddapp (Ed.), *International Review of Research in Developmental Disabilities,* (Vol. 46). Waltham, MA: Academic Press.

Hewett, R. (2015). *Investigation of data relating to blind and partially sighted people in the quarterly Labour Force Survey: October 2011 – September 2014*. Retrieved from http://www.rnib.org.uk/knowledge-and-research-hub-research-reports/employment-research/labour-force-survey-2015

Hewett, R., & Keil, S. (2014). *Investigation of data relating to blind and partially sighted people in the quarterly Labour Force Survey: October 2010 – September 2013.* RNIB. Retrieved from http://www.rnib.org.uk/knowledge-and-research-hub/research-reports/employment-research/labour-force-survey-2014

Hewett, R., Douglas, G., & Keil, S. (2013) *Young people's progress and views of independence aged 16-19: Post-14 transitions support.* Birmingham: Visual Impairment Centre for Teaching and Research, University of Birmingham. Retrieved from

http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/education/research/victar/research/transitions-study.aspx

Higgins, N., Phillips, H., Cowan, C., & Tikao, K. (2009). New Zealand educational services for kåpo (blind) Māori: What are the issues for kāpo Māori and their whānau. *Journal of the Children's Issues Centre, 13(*1), 13-20. Available from: <http://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=797503523379588;res=IELNZC> ISSN: 1174-0477.

Hinds, A., Sinclair, A., Park, J., Suttie, A., Paterson, H., & MacDonald, M. (2003). Impact of an interdisciplinary low vision service on the quality of life of low vision patients. *British Journal of Ophthalmology, 87(1)*, 1391-1396.

Hobson, L. (2008, November 11). *Blind Citizens Australia calls for a meeting to discuss the impending closure of Vision Australia's school age education services* (Media release). Retrieved February 24, 2013, from http://www.bca.org.au/

Hodges, L., & Douglas, G. (2005). Short Study on Hearing and Sight Loss. *Preliminary Report for the Thomas Pocklington Trust.* Birmingham: *University of Birmingham*.

Holbrook, E. A., Caputo, J. L., Perry, T. L., Fuller, D. K., & Morgan, D. W. (2009). Physical activity, body composition, and perceived quality of life of adults with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, *103*(1), 17.

Holbrook, M. C. (2008). Teaching reading and writing to students with visual impairments: who is responsible?. *Perspectives*, *102*.

Holbrook, M. C., & A. Koenig (2000). History and Theory of Teaching Children and Youths with Visual Impairments. *Foundations of Education. Volume I: (2nd edition).* New York: AFB press.

Holland, J. (2007). Emotions and Research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 10*(3), 195-209.

Holmes, M. (1980). Forward to the basics: A radical conservative reconstruction. *Curriculum Inquiry, 10*(4), 383-418.

Howe, K. (1996). Educational ethics, social justice and children with disabilities. In C. R. Chirstensen, (Ed.), *Disability and the dilemmas of education and justice,* (46–62). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Hubbard, G., Backett-Milburn, K., & Kemmer, D. (2001). Working with emotion: issues for the researcher in fieldwork and teamwork. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 4*(2), 119-137.

Huebner, K. M., Merk-Adams, B., Stryker, D., & Wolffe, K. E. (2004). *The national agenda for the education of children and youths with visual impairments, including those with multiple disabilities - Revised.* New York: AFB Press.

Hutchison, T. (1995). The classification of disability. *Archives of disease in childhood, 73*(2), 91.

Huurre, T. & Aro, H. (2000). The psychosocial well-being of Finnish adolescents with vision impairments versus those with chronic conditions and those with no disabilities. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 94*(5), 625–637.

Ibn Kathir (1996) Tafsir Al Qur'an Al-A'dim [Interpretation of the holy Qur'an] (2nd ed., Vol.1).

IDEA (2004) *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. (2004, December 3). P.L. 108-446.

Işıkoğlu, N. (2007). Okul öncesi eğitim kurumlarında kalite [The quality of pre-school education organisations]. *Gazi Üniversitesi Mesleki Eğitim Dergisi* [*The Journal of Professional Education, Gazi University*]*, 9*(18), 37- 47.

Jackel, B., Wilson, M., & Hartmann, E. (2010). A survey of parents of children with cortical or cerebral visual impairment. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 104*(10), 613.

Jasper, C. R. & Waldhart, P. (2013). Employer attitudes on hiring employees with disabilities in the leisure and hospitality industry: Practical and theoretical implications. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 25*(4), 577–594.

Jegatheesan, B., & Witz, K. (2014). An ethnographic study on religion, spirituality, and maternal influence on sibling relationships in a muslim family with a child with autism. *Review of Disability Studies: An International Journal, 9*(1).

Jenkinson, J. (1997). *Mainstream or special? Educating students with disabilities.* London: Routledge.

Johnson, B., & Macleod Clarke, J. (2003). Collecting sensitive data: the impact on researchers. *Qualitative Health Research, 13*(3), 421-434.

Johnson, N. (2009) The role of self and emotion within qualitative sensitive research: a reflective account. *ENQUIRE,* (4), November 2009.

Joshi, K. Y. (2006). *New roots in America's sacred ground: Religion, race and ethnicity in Indian America.* NJ: Rutgers University Press.

KAD-MER (2015). "Kadin cinayetlerini durduracagiz platformu" 2015 yili raporu ("We will stop women's murders platform", report of 2015) Accessed: 17. 02. 2016 from: https://kadincinayetlerinidurduracagiz.net/veriler/2551/kadin-cinayetlerini-durduracagiz-platformu-2015-yili-raporu

Kapucu, S. & Yıldırım, U. (2013). Physics' teachers' beliefs about the attainment of skill objectives and the extent of these beliefs' reflection on teachers' instructional practices.

International Journal of New Trends in Arts, Sports and Science Education, 2(4), 10–22.

Kapucu, S., & Yildirim, U. (2014). Physics teachers' behavioral, control and normative beliefs about teaching physics according to the national high school physics curriculum in Turkey. *International Journal of Environmental and Science Education, 9*(2), 133-157.

Karasu, N. (2014). Guidance and research centers of Turkey: from the perspective of parents. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 29*(3), 358-369.

Kargin, T. (2007). The Process for Educational Assessment and Individualized Education Programme. *Ankara Ünivesitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Özel Eğitim Dergisi, 8*(1) 1-13.

Kargın, T. (2004). Kaynaştırma: tanımı, gelişimi ve ilkeleri [Inclusion: its definition, development and principals]. *Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Science, Journal of Special Education, 5*(2).

Kaya, I. (2000). Modernity and veiled women. *European Journal of Social Theory, 3*(2), 195–214.

Keil, S., Miller, O., & Cobb, R. (2006). Special educational needs and disability. *British Journal of Special Education, 33*(4), 168-172.

Kelly, S. M. (2009). Use of assistive technology by students with vısual ımpaırments: Findings from a national survey. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 103*(8), 470–480.

Kelly, S. M. (2011). The use of assistive technology by high school students with visual impairments: A second look at the current problem. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 105*(4), 235.

Kesiktas, A. D. (2009). Early childhood special education for children with visual impairments: problems and solutions. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice, 9*(2), 823-832.

Kesiktas, A. D., & Akcamete, A. G. (2011). The relationship of personnel preparation to the competence of teachers of students with visual impairments in Turkey. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 105*(2), 108.

Kırcaali-Iftar, G. (2006). *Turkey'de gelişimsel yetersizlik alanı ve ozel egitim* [Developmental disabilities and special education in Turkey]. Tohum Turkey Otizm Erken Tanı ve Egitim Vakfı Raporu.

Kirchner, C., & Diament, S. (1999a). Estimates of the number of visually impaired students, their teachers, and orientation and mobility specialists: Part 1. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 93*(9), 600-610.

Kirchner, C., & Diament, S. (1999b). Estimates of the number of visually impaired students, their teachers, and orientation and mobility specialists: Part 2. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 93*(11), 738-743.

Kirchner, C., & Smith, B. (2005). Transition to what? Education and employment outcomes for visually impaired youths after high school. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 99*(8), 499.

Kisanji, J. (1995). Interface between culture and disability in the Tanzanian context: Part ii. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education, 42*(2), 109-124.

Kitayama, S. & Park, J., (2013) CULTURE AND THE SELF: Implications for consumer behaviour. (eds Ruvio, A. A., & Belk, R. W. (2013). *The Routledge companion to identity and consumption*. Routledge.

Kitayama, S., & Markus, H. R. (2000). The pursuit of happiness and the realization of sympathy: Cultural patterns of self, social relations, and well-being. In E. Diener, & E. Suh (Eds.), *Subjective well-being across cultures.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Koch, D. S., Nelipovich, M., & Sneed, Z. (2002). Alcohol and other drug abuse as coexisting disabilities: Considerations for counselors serving individuals who are blind or visually impaired. *RE:view: Rehabilitation and Education for Blindness and Visual Impairment, 33*(4), 151-159.

Koçak, S., & Kavak, Y. (2014). Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı'nın öğretmen atama esasları ve kaynak yükseköğretim programlarıyla ilgili gelişmeler. [Ministry of National Education, developments and basses of teacher recruitments]. *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, *29*(4), 157-170.

Koenig, A., & Holbrook, M. C. (2000). *Foundations of Education. Volume II: Instruction Strategies for Children and Youths with Visual Impairment* (2nd ed.). New York: AFB

Koşaner, S. (2007). *Legal rights, laws, and implementations for the disabled.* Izmir, Turkey: Konak Municipality.

Küçükahmet, L. (2007). Öğretim yılında uygulanmaya başlanan öğretmen yetiştirme lisans programlarinda değerlendirilmesi [An evaluation of the academic programme of teachers preparation courses]. *Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi* [*Journal of Turkish Education Sciences*]*, 5*(2), 203-218.

La Grow, S. (2004). Factors that affect the employment status of working-age adults with visual impairments in New Zealand. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, *98*(09).

La Grow, S. J. & Daye, P. (2005). Barriers to employment identified by blind and vision-impaired persons in New Zealand. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand, 26*, 173-185.

La Grow, S. J. (2003). Employment among working-age members of the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 97*(7), 429-433.

Lamorey, S. (2002). The effects of culture on special education services: Evil eyes, prayer meetings, and IEPs. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 34*(5), 67.

Lancet, (2009). Disability: beyond the medical model. *The Lancet, 374*(9704), 1793–1799.

Law no: 3797 organısatıon and duties of Mınıstry of Natıonal Educatıon (2005) [Milli Eğitim Bakanlığın Teşkilat ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanun no 3797] accessed online: http://mevzuat.meb.gov.tr/html/73.html

Le Fanu, G. (2014). International development, disability, and education: Towards a capabilities-focused discourse and praxis. *International Journal of Educational Development, 38*(9), 69–79.

Lee, I. S., & Park S. K. (2008). Employment status and predictors among people with visual impairments in South Korea: results of a national survey. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 102*(8), 147-159.

Lewis, S., & Allman, C. B. (2014). Instruction and assessment: General principles and strategies. In C. B. Allman, & S. Lewis, (Eds.), *ECC essentials: Teaching the expanded core curriculum to students with visual impairments* (pp. 31-58). New York: AFB Press.

Lewis, S., & Allman, C. B. (2014). Learning, development, and children with visual impairments: The evolution of skills. In C. B. Allman, & S. Lewis, (Eds.), *ECC essentials: Teaching the expanded core curriculum to students with visual impairments* (pp. 3-14). New York: AFB Press.

Lewis, S., & McKenzie, A. R. (2010). The competencies, roles, supervision, and training needs of paraeducators working with students with visual impairments in local and residential schools. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, *104*(8), 464.

Lewis, S., Savaiano, E. M., Blankenship, K., & Greeley-Bennett, K. (2014) Three areas of the expanded core curriculum for students with visual impairment; research priorities for independent living skills, self-determination, and social interaction skills. In D. J. Fidler , & R. M. Hoddapp (Eds.). *International Review of Research in Developmental Disabilities, Current Issues in the Education of Students with Visual Impairments. Volume 46.* Waltham, MA: Academic Press.

Liasidou, A. (2012). Inclusive education and critical pedagogy at the intersections of disability, race, gender and class. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies, 10*(1), 168-184.

Liasidou, A., & Antoniou, A. (2013). A special teacher for a special child? (Re)considering the role of the special education teacher within the context of an inclusive education reform agenda. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 28*(4). 494-506.

Lieberman, L. J., Haegele, J. A., Columna, L., & Conroy, P. (2014a). How students with visual impairments can learn components of the expanded core curriculum through physical education. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (Online), 108*(3), 239.

Lieberman, L. J., Ponchillia, P. E., & Ponchillia, S. K. V. (2014b). Infusing the Expanded Core Curriculum into Physical Education for Children with Visual Impairments. *Palaestra, 28*(3), 44-50.

Lieberman, L. J., Modell, S., & Jackson, I. (2006). *Going PLACES: A transition guide to physical activity for youth with visual impairments.* Louisville, KY: American Printing House for the Blind.

Lieberman, L. J., Ponchillia, P. E., & Ponchillia, S. K. V. (2012). *Physical education and sports for people with visual impairments and deafblindness: Foundations of instruction.* New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

Lieberman, L. J., Robinson, B. L., & Rollheiser, H. (2006). Youth with visual impairments: Experiences in general physical education. *RE:view, 38*(1), 35-48.

Lifshitz, H., Hen, I., & Weisse, I. (2007). Self-concept, self-esteem, personality traits and psychopathological symptoms in adolescents with and without vision impairment. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 101*(1), 96–107.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry* (Vol. 75). London: Sage.

Lingard, B., & Mills, M. (2007). Pedagogies making a difference: Issues of social justice and inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education,11*(3), 233-244.

Llewellyn, A., & Hogan, K. (2000). The use and abuse of models of disability. *Disability & Society, 15*(1), 157-165.

Lloyd, C. (2008). Removing barriers to achievement: A strategy for inclusion or exclusion?. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 12*(2), 221-236.

Lohmeier, K. L. (2005). Implementing the Expanded Core Curriculum in Specialized Schools for the Blind. *Re:view: Rehabilitation Education for Blindness and Visual Impairment, 37*(3), 126-133.

Lohmeier, K. L. (2006). *An analysis of disability-specific curriculum in a specialized School for the Blind: A case study*. (Unpublished PhD dissertation) *International 66*(08), 2891A. (UMI No. 3187969)

Lohmeier, K. L. (2007). Integrating expanded core sessions into the K-12 program: A high school scheduling approach. RE: view, 39(1), 31.

Lohmeier, K. L. (2009). Aligning state standards and the expanded core curriculum: Balancing the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 103*(1), 44.

Lohmeier, K., Blankenship, K., & Hatlen, P. (2009). Expanded core curriculum: 12 years later. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 103*(2), 103.

Lowenfeld, B. (1973). History of the education of visually handicapped children. *The visually handicapped child in school*, 1-25. John Day Company, Incorporated.

Lueck, A. H. (1999). Setting curricular priorities for students with visual impairments. *RE:view, 31*(2), 54.

Lueck, A. H. (2010). *Functional Vision: A Practitioner's Guide to Evaluation and Intervention.* (3rd ed.), New York: AFB Press.

Luecking, R.G. (2003). Employer Perspectives on Hiring and Accommodating Youth in Transition. *Journal of Special Education Technology, 18*(40), 65–72.

Lynch, K. (2001). Creating a dialogue between sociological and egalitarian theory in education. *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 11*(3), 237–260. DOI: 10.1080/09620210100200077

Lynch, K., & Baker, J. (2005). Equality in education: An equality of condition perspective. *Theory and Research in Education, 3*(2), 131-164.

Lyon, E., & Coyle, A. (2007). *Analysing Qualitative Data in Psychology*. London: Sage.

Marder, C., & D'Amico, R. (1992). *How Well Are Youth with Disabilities Really Doing? A Comparison of Youth with Disabilities and Youth in General. A Report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study of Special Education Students*. Retrieved March 5, 2014, from: http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED369233

Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (2000). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. Psychological review, 98(2), 224.(accessed online on 02/03/2016 : http://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/honors130/culture.html

Mason, C., & Davidson, R. (2000). *National plan for training personnel to serve children with blindness and low vision.* Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children, CEC Publications.

Mason, H., & McCall, S. (1997) *Visual impairment: access to education for children and young people.* London: David Fulton Publishers.

Mastrilli, T., & Sardo-Brown, D. (2002). Pre-service teachers knowledge about islam: A snapshot post September 11, 2001. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 29*(3), 156.

Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Majchrzak, A. (1989). *Methods for Policy Research.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

McBroom, L. (1997). Making the grade: college students with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, *91*, 261–270.

McDonnall, M. C. (2010). Factors predicting post-high school employment for young adults with visual impairments. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 54*(1), 36-45. Retrieved from http://rcb.sagepub.com/content/54/1/36

McDonnall, M. C. (2013). Employer attitudes towards persons who are blind or visually impaired as employees: Development of a measurement instrument. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, *58*(1), 29-36.

McDonnall, M. C. (2014). Employer attitudes towards blind or visually impaired employees: Initial development of a measurement instrument. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, *58*(1), 29-36.

McDonnall, M. C., & Crudden, A. (2009). Factors affecting the successful employment of transition-age youths with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 103*(6), 329-341.

McDonnall, M. C., Crudden, A., & O'Mally, J. (2015). Predictors of employer attitudes toward people who are blind or visually impaired as employees. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation, 42*(1), 41-50. doi: 10.3233/JVR-140722

McDonnall, M. C., O'Mally, J. & Crudden, A. (2014). Employer knowledge of and attitudes toward individuals who are blind or visually impaired as employees. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 108*(3), 213-225.

McDonnell, J. (2010). Employment training. In J. McDonnell (Ed.), *Instruction in Community Settings*. Los Angeles, California: Sage.

McDonough, H., Sticken, E., & Haack, S. (2006). The expanded core curriculum for students who are visually impaired. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 100*(10), 596.

McHugh, E., & Lieberman, L. (2003). The impact of developmental factors on stereotypic rocking of children with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 97*(8), 453–475.

McKenzie, A. R., & Lewis, S. (2008). The role and training of paraprofessionals who work with students who are visually impaired. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 102*(8), 459.

McLinden, M., & Douglas, G (2014), Education of children with sensory needs: reducing barriers to learning for children with visual impairment. In A. Holliman (Ed.), *Educational Psychology: An International Perspective*. London: Routledge.

McLinden, M., & Douglas, G. (2013). Sensory Needs. *The Routledge International Companion to Educational Psychology,* 246.

McLinden, M., & McCall, S. (2002). *Learning through touch: Supporting children with visual impairment and additional difficulties.* London: David Fulton Publishers.

McManus, S., & Lord, C. (2012). *Circumstances of people with sight loss: secondary analysis of understanding society and the life opportunities survey.* London: Natcen report for RNIB.

Melekoğlu, M. A. (2014). Special education today in turkey. *Special Education International Perspectives: Practices Across the Globe (Advances in Special Education, Volume 28*) Emerald Group Publishing Limited, *28*, 529-557.

Melekoğlu, M. A., Cakiroğlu, O., & Malmgren, K.W. (2009) Special education in Turkey. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 13*(3), 287-298.

Meral, B. F., & Turnbull, H. R. (2014). Analysis of Special Education Policy in Turkey and United States: Improving Turkey's Policy for Students with Intellectual Disability. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 11*(3), 165-175.

Mertens, D. M. (1998). *Research methods in education and psychology: integrating diversity with quantitative & qualitative approaches.* London: Sage.

Miles, M. (1995). Disability in eastern religious context: Historical perspective. *Disability and Society, 10*(1), 49-69. DOI: 10.1080/09687599550023723

Miles, M. (2008), Some Influences of Religions on Attitudes Towards Disabilities and People with Disabilities. Journal of Religion, Disability & Health. Published online: 10 Oct 2008

Miles, M. B., Huberman, M. A. & Saldana, J. (2013). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.

Miller, J. G. (1988). Bridging the content-structure dichotomy: Culture and the self. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The cross-cultural challenge to social psychology* (pp. 266-281). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Ministry of National Education (MEB). (2005). “Özel Eğitim Rehberlik ve Dayanışma Hizmetleri Genel Müdürlüğü [General Directorate of Special Education, Guidance and Advisory Services] (n.d.)”. In Tarihçe [Short History] Available on-line at: http://orgm.meb.gov.tr/tarihce_1.htm (accessed 29 May 2013)

Ministry of National Education (MEB). (2014) Ögretmen yeterlikleri: Ögretmenlik meslegi genel ve òzel alan yeterlikleri [Teachers' competencies: Teachers' generic and subject matter competencies]. Ankara: *Devlet Kitaplan Müdürlügu.*

Ministry of National Education (MEB). (2015a) Explanation: Overall Structure of Turkish National Education System. In: *National Education Statistics Formal Education 2014/'15, Ministry of National Education Strategy Development Presidency.* Retrieved June 6, 2015, from: http://sgb.meb.gov.tr/istatistik/meb_istatistikleri_orgun_egitim_2014_2015.pdf [In Turkish]

Ministry of National Education (MEB). (2015b) National Education Statistics Formal Education 2014/'15, Ministry of National Education Strategy Development Presidency. Retrieved June 2015, from: http://sgb.meb.gov.tr/istatistik/meb_istatistikleri_orgun_egitim_2014_2015.pdf {In Turkish]

Mitchell, W. & Irvine, A. (2008). I'm okay, you're okay?: Reflections on the well-being and ethical requirements of researchers and research participants in conducting qualitative fieldwork interviews. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 7*(4), 31-44.

Morris, C., & Sharma, U. (2011). Facilitating the inclusion of children with vision impairment: Perspectives of itinerant support teachers. *Australasian Journal of Special Education, 35*(2), 191-203.

Mutlu, S. Ö. (2014). 1923 Öncesi Dönemde Türk Kadını [The Turkish Woman Before 1923]. *Aydınlanma 1923* [*Enlightenment 1923*]*. 46*(46). 59-66.

Nadir, U., & Aktan, M. C. (2015). Social justice, education and school social work in Turkey. *Quality*, *Social Justice and Accountability in Education Worldwide*, 213-217. [accessed online: http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED568595.pdf#page=217

Nartgün, Ş. S. (2010). Perceptions of special education academic staff: Who should be employed as special education teachers? *International Journal of Human Sciences, 7*(1), 1082-1113.

Nartgün, Ş. S. (2008). Aday öğretmenlerin gözüyle Milli Eğitim Bakanlığına bağlı eğitim kurumlarına öğretmen atama esasları [From teacher candidates' perspectives, the teacher recruitment procedures]. *Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 47.

Nicolau, I. (2014). Women's rights in Islam. *Contemp. Readings L. & Soc. Just, 6*, 711.

Norwich, B. (2008). *Dilemmas of difference, inclusion and disability: International perspectives and future directions.* London: Routledge.

Norwich, B. (2013). *Addressing tensions and dilemmas in inclusive education: Living with uncertainty.* London: Routledge.

Ogborn, J. (2002). Ownership and transformation: teachers using curriculum innovations. *Physics Education, 37*(2), 142-146.

Okuturlar, M. H. (1968) *Özel Eğitim (Special Education).* Istanbul, Turkey: Okuturlar Yayınları.

Oliver, M. & Barnes, C. (1998). *Disabled people and social policy: From exclusion to inclusion*, London: Longman.

Oliver, M. (2004). The Social Model in Action: If I Had a Hammer. In C. Barnes, & G. Mercer, (Eds.), *Implementing the Social Model of Disability: Theory and Research* (pp.18–31). Leeds: The Disability Press.

Oliver, M. (2013). The social model of disability: Thirty years on. *Disability & Society, 28*(7), 1024-1026.

Oliver, M., & Barnes, C. (2012). Back to the future: the World Report on Disability. *Disability & Society, 27*(4), 575-579.

Olmstead, J. E. (2005). *Itinerant teaching: Tricks of the trade for teachers of students with visual impairments* (2nd ed.). New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L. & Wynaden, D. (2000). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 33*(1), 93-96.

Owens, J. (2015). Exploring the critiques of the social model of disability: the transformative possibility of Arendt's notion of power. *Sociology of Health & Illness, 3*(3), 385–403.

Özaydın, L. (2015). Teaching play skills to visually impaired preschool children: Its effect on social interaction. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice, 15*(4), 1021–1038.

Özaydın, L., & Çolak, A. (2011). Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin “kaynaştırma eğitimine” ve “okul öncesi eğitimde kaynaştırma eğitimi hizmet içi eğitim programı” na ilişkin görüşleri [The views of early childhood teachers regarding “inclusive education” and “pre-school inclusive education in-service program”]. *Kalem Eğitim ve İnsan Bilimleri Dergisi* [*The Journal of Pen Education and Human Sciences*], *1*(1), 189-226. [In Turkish]

Özaydın, L., Tekin-İftar, E., & Kaner, S. (2008). Arkadaşlık becerilerini geliştirme programının özel gereksinimi olan okul öncesi çocuklarının sosyal etkileşimlerine etkisi [The influence of friendship development programme on to social interactions of early childhood students with special needs]. *Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Özel Eğitim Dergisi,*[*Ankara University, Educational Science, Journal of Special Education*]*, 9*(1), 15-32. [In Turkish]

Özçelik, H. (2010). Hadislere göre günahların bağışlanma yolları (Ways of forgiveness of sins according to Hadiths). *Atatürk Üniversitesi İlâhiyât Tetkikleri Dergisi (Atatürk University, journal of Religıous Studies)* 34(1).

Özel Egitim Destek Programi [Special education support programme]. (2004)

Özel Eğitim Hizmetleri Yönetmeliği, [Regulation of specıal educatıonal servıces] (2012). Retrieved on April 23, 2015, from http://mevzuat.meb.gov.tr/html/66.html

Özer, S. (2015) İslam ve diğer medeniyetlerin engelliye bakışı [Approaches toward disability in Islam and other civilisations]. *Bilimname, 28*(1). [In Turkish]

Ozgur, I. (2004). *Engelli çocuklar ve eğitimi: Özel eğitim* [*Children with Disabilities and their Education: Special Education*]. Adana: Karahan Kitabevi.[In Turkish]

OZIDA. (2005). Başbakanlık Özürlüler İdaresi Başkanlığı (OZIDA) [Prime Minister Administration for Disabled People]. *Türkiye Özürlüler Araştırması 2002 İkinci Analizi [Turkey Disabled People Study 2002 Second Analyze*] Available on-line at: http://www.ozida.gov.tr (accessed 3 March 2014) OpenURL University of Birmingham [In Turkish]

Özsoy, G., Özsoy, S., Özkara, Y., & Memiş A. (2010). Öğretmen adaylarının öğretmenlik mesleğini tercih etmelerinde etkili olan faktörler [The factors affecting the decision-making process of teacher candidates choosing to become teachers]. *İlköğretim Online* [*Early Years Education Online*]*, 9(*3), 910-921. [In Turkish]

Ozsoy, Y., Ozyurek, M., & Eripek, S. (1998). *Özel eğitime muhtaç çocuklar 'Özel eğitime giriş'* [*Children with Special Education Needs 'Introduction to Special Education*]. Ankara: Karatape Yayınları.[In Turkish]

Öztürk, E., & Bikmaz, F. (2013). Boarding Elementary District Schools Teachers' Views about Elementary School Curricula: Sample of Çankiri. *Egitim Bilimleri Fakultesi Dergisi* [*The Journal of Education Sciences Faculty*], *46*(1), 249-274.

Öztürk, M. (2011). *Türkiye'de engelli gerçeği(Reality of disability in Turkey)*. Müsiad Cep Kitapları, İstanbul.

Ozyegin, G. (2009). Virginal facades sexual freedom and guilt among young Turkish women. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 16*(2), 103-123.

Özyürek, M. (2005). *Bireyselleştirilmiş eğitim programı temelleri ve geliştirilmesi.* [*Individualized educational plans' priciples and their development*]. Ankara*:* Kök Yayıncılık.[In Turkish]

Özyürek, M. (2008). Nitelikli Öğretmen Yetiştirmede Sorunlar ve Çözümler: Özel Eğitim Örneği [The problems and solutions in preparing qualified/proficient teachers: an

example of special education]. *Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi [The Journal of Turkish Educational Sciences], 12*(1), 189 - 226. [In Turkish]

Palmer, C. (2005). Issues and challenges in the interface between Regular School Curriculum and the Expanded Core Curriculum. *International Congress Series, 1282,* 922-926.

Palmer, C. (2006). Children's interpersonal awareness of friendship: A comparative study of children with vision impairment and their sighted peers. Proceedings of the AARE 2006 International Education Research Conference, 1-12. Available from http://www.aare.edu.au/06pap/pal06492.pdf retrieved 27.07.2014

Parıltı, (2015). Hakkimizda (About us). Retrieved on February 2, 2015, from http://www.patatesprint.com.tr/seslikitap/bilgilendir.pdf

Pavey, S. A. (2011). *The provision of mobility and independence education to children with visual impairment in mainstream schools* (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham, UK).

Perakyla, A. (1997). *Qualitative research: Theory, method and practice.* London: SAGE Publications.

Perkins, K., Columna, L., Lieberman, L., & Bailey, J. (2013). Parents' perceptions of physical activity for their children with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 107*(2), 131.

Pey T., Nzegwu F., & Dooley G. (2007). *Functionality and the needs of blind and partially-sighted adults in the UK – a survey.* Reading, UK: Guide Dogs for the Blind Association.

Pinquart, M., & Pfeiffer, J. P. (2010). Alcohol use in German adolescents with visual impairments and sighted adolescents. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 104*(9), 554-564.

Pinquart, M., & Pfeiffer, J. P. (2012). Psychological Adjustment in Adolescents with Vision Impairment. *International Journal of Disability Development and Education, 59*(2), 145-155.

Pitt-Rivers, J. (1974). Honor and social status. In J. G. Peristiany (Ed.), *Honor and shame: The values of Mediterranean society* (pp. 19-77). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Polat, R. K. (2012). Digital exclusion in Turkey: A policy perspective. *Government Information Quarterly, 29*(4), 589-596.

Quarmby, K. (2013). *Scapegoat: Why we are failing disabled people.* London: Portobello Books Ltd.

Rager, K. (2005). Compassion, stress and the qualitative researcher. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(3), 423-430.

Ravenscroft, J. (2013). High attainment low employment: The how and why educational professionals are failing children with visual impairment. *The International Journal of Learning, 18*(12), 135–144.

Reinhart, A. K. (2003). On the 'Introduction to Islam. In B. M. Wheeler, (Ed.), *Teaching Islam* (pp. 22-45). New York: Oxford University Press.

Robinson, L. (2010). *About us, Statewide Vision Resource Centre.* Retrieved October 29, 2014, from; http://www.svrc.vic.edu.au/Aabout.shtml

Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research: a Resource for Users of Social Research Methods in Applied Settings* (2nd ed.). Chichester: Wiley.

Robson, C. (2011). *Real World Research: a Resource for Users of Social Research Methods in Applied Settings* (3rd ed.). Chichester: Wiley.

Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Rosenblum, L. P. (2001). Women with visual impairment. In M. Milian, & J. N. Erin (Eds.), *Diversity and visual impairments: The influence of race, gender, religion, and ethnicity on the individual.* New York: AFB Press.

Rosenblum, L. P., & Corn, A. L. (2002). Experiences of older adults who stopped driving because of their visual impairments: Part 1. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 96*(6), 389-398.

Rouquette, A., Badley, E. M., Falissard, B., Dub, T., Leplege, A., & Coste, J. (2015). Moderators, mediators, and bidirectional relationships in the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) framework: An empirical investigation using a longitudinal design and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). *Social Science & Medicine, 135*(1), 133-142.

Rowling, L. (1999). Being in, being out, being with: affect and the role of the qualitative researcher in loss and grief research. *Mortality, 4*(2), 167-181.

Rude, H., Jackson, L., Correa, S., & Luckner, J. (2005). Perceived needs of students with low-incidence disabilities in rural areas. *Rural Special Education Quarterly, 24*(3), 3-11.

Sacks, S. Z. & Wolffe, K. E. (2006). *Teaching social skills to students with visual impairment: From theory to practice.* New York: American Foundation for the Blind.

Sacks, S. Z., & Reardon, M. P. (1988). *Maximizing social integration for visually handicapped students: Applications and practice. The social development of visually impaired students.* San Francisco: San Francisco State University.

Sacks, S. Z., Wolffe, K. E., & Tierney, D. (1998). Lifestyles of students with visual impairments: Preliminary studies of social networks. *Exceptional Children, 64*(4), 463-478.

Şafak, P. (2012). Görme yetersizliği olan çocukların eğitimi [Teaching children with visual impairment]. In G. A. Akçamete, (Ed.*,) Genel eğitim okullarında özel gereksinimi olan çocuklar ve özel eğitim* [*Children with special educational needs in mainstream schools and special education*]*, (pp.* 397-440)*.* Ankara: Kok Yayıncılık.

Sağlam, A. Ç., & Bostancı, A. B. (2012). Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Merkez ve Taşra Örgütleri Yönetim Pozisyonlarında Kadınların Temsil Edilme Düzeyine Yönelik Yönetici Görüşleri [The views of leaders regarding the current rate of representation of women in leading positions of the Ministry of Education]. *Uşak Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* [*The Journal of Social Studies, Uşak University*], *5*(2), 140–155.

Sakız, H., & Woods, C. (2014). From thinking to practice: school staff views on disability inclusion in Turkey. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 29*(2), 135-152.

Sakız, H., & Woods, C. (2015). Achieving inclusion of students with disabilities in Turkey: current challenges and future prospects. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 19*(1), 21 – 35.

Salman, U. A., (2014, March 2). Engelleri Kaldiran Atama [Removing the barriers: assignment for employment]. *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved March 29, 2016, from: http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/al-jazeera-ozel/engelleri-kaldiran-atama [in Turkish]

Santrock, J. W. (2014). Adolescence (15th ed.). US: McGraw Hill.

Sapp, W., & Hatlen, P. (2007). *Perceptions of teachers of students with visual impairments on their preparation to teacher the expanded core curriculum*. (Unpublished manuscript).

Sapp, W., & Hatlen, P. (2010). The expanded core curriculum: Where we have been, where we are going, and how we can get there. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 104*(6), 338.

Saunders, A., Douglas, G., & Lynch, P., (2013) *Tackling unemployment for blind and partially sighted people.* London: RNIB. Retrieved April 3, 2015, from http://www.rnib.org.uk/knowledge-and-research-hub/research-reports/employment-research/tackling-unemployment

Seale, C. (2003). *Social research methods: A reader*. London: Routledge.

Seferoğlu, S. S. (2004). Oğretmen Adaylarının Öğretmen Yeterlilikleri Açısından Kendilerini Değerlendirmeleri [Self-evaluation of the teacher candidates regarding their Self-

sufficiency in teaching]. *Hacettepe University Faculty of Education Journal, 26*(1), 131-140.

Şenel, H. G. (1998). Special education in Turkey. *European journal of special needs education, 13*(3), 254-261.

Sev'er, A., & Yurdakul, G. (2001). Culture of honor, culture of change a feminist analysis of honor killings in rural Turkey. *Violence against women, 7*(9), 964-998.

Sevgili, M.M. (2007) İslam Hukuku Açısından Töre Cinayetleri (from İslamic laws lence to honour killings), (Unpublished Master's thesis) Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey.

Sezgin, F., & Duran, E. (2011). Kamu Personeli Seçme Sınavı'nın (KPSS) öğretmen adaylarının akademik ve sosyal yaşantılarına yansımaları [the influence of Teacher Recruitment Test (KPSS) on academic and social life of teacher candidates]. *Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi, 153*(153).

Shakespeare, T. (2006). *Disability rights and wrongs*. London: Routledge.

Shakespeare, T. (2008). Debating disability. *Journal of medical ethics, 34*(1), 11-14.

Shapiro, D. R., Moffett, A., Lieberman, L. & Dummer, G. M. (2005). Perceived competence of children with Visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness. 99*(6). 15–25.

Shaw, A., Gold, D., & Wolffe, K. (2007). Employment-related experiences of youths who are visually impaired: How are these youths faring? *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 101*(1), 7-21.

Silberman, R. K., & Sacks, S. Z. (2007). *Expansion of the role and function of the teacher of students with visual impairments for students who also have severe/multiple disabilities.* Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children, Division on Visual Impairments.

Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook.* London: SAGE Publications.

Simmons, M. (2007). Insider ethnography: tinker, tailor, researcher or spy? *Nurse Researcher, 14*(4), 7-17.

Skrtic, Thomas M. (1995). *Disability and democracy: Reconstructing (special) education for postmodernity*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Slee, R. (1997). Imported or important theory? Sociological interrogations of disablement and special education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 18*(3), 407-419.

Slee, R. (2011). *The Irregular School: Exclusion, Schooling and Inclusive Education*. London: Routledge.

Smith, D. W., Kelley, P., Maushak, N. J., Griffm-Shirley, N., & Lan, W. Y. (2009). Assistive technology competencies for teachers of students with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 103*(9), 457-469.

Spragg, D., & Stone, J. (1997). *The peripatetic/advisory teacher; Visual Impairment access to education for children and young people.* London: David Fulton.

Spungin, S. J., & Ferrell, K. A. (2007). *The role and function of the teacher of students with visual impairments.* Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Stainback, S. B. E., & Stainback, W. C. (1996). *Inclusion: A guide for educators*. Paul H Brookes Publishing.

Sucuoğlu, B. (2006). *Etkili kaynaştırma uygulamaları* [*Effectıve inclusive practises*]*.* Ankara: Ekinoks Yayıncılık. [In Turkish]

Sucuoğlu, B., & Kargın, T. (2012). *Ilköğretimde Kaynaştırma Uygulamaları* [*Inclusive practises at primary schools*]*.* Ankara: Kök Yayıncılık. [In Turkish]

Sülün, K. (2012). *İlköğretim Genel Eğitim Sınıfı İle Özel Eğitim Sınıfında Öğrenim Gören Kaynaştırma Öğrencilerinin Sosyal Becerilerinin İncelenmesi* [*Comparing social skills of primary schools students with special needs who are attending inclusive mainstream classrooms and segregated classrooms*]*.* (Unpublished Master's thesis). Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, (Dokuz Eylul University) Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, [Institute of educational science]. İzmir, Turkey. [In Turkish]

Swain, J., & French, S. (2000). Towards an affirmation model of disability. *Disability & Society, 15*(4), 569-582.

Swick, K. J., & Williams, R. D. (2006). An analysis of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological perspective for early childhood educators: Implications for working with families experiencing stress. Early Childhood Education Journal, 33(5), 371-378.

Tang, D. T. S. (2007). The research pendulum: multiple roles and responsibilities as a researcher. *Journal of Lesbian Studies, 10*(3), 11-27.

Taşkın, A. G. P. (2010). *5580 Sayılı Özel Öğretim Kurumları Kanunu ve Getirdiği Yenilikler (Law 5580 on private education institutions and changes coming along with*). Ankara: Ankara Bbarosu, 159.

Tekin-İftar, E., & Kırcaali-İftar, G. (2006). *Özel eğitimde yanlışsız öğretim yöntemleri* [*Error free instructional strategies in special education*]*.* Istanbul: Nobel Yayın Dağıtım [In Turkish]

Terzi L. (2014). Reframing Inclusive Education: Educational Equality as Capability Equality. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 44(1),* 479-493.

Test, D. W., Mazzotti, V. L., Mustian, A. L., Fowler, C. H., Kortering, L., & Kohler, P. (2009). Evidence-based secondary transition predictors for improving postschool outcomes for students with disabilities. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals.*

Thomas, C. (2004). How is disability understood? An examination of sociological approaches. *Disability and Society, 19*(6), 569-583.

Thomas, G. (2012). A review of thinking and research about inclusive education policy, with suggestions for a new kind of inclusive thinking. *British Educational Research Journal,* 39*, 473-490.*

Thomas, G. (2013). A review of thinking and research about inclusive education policy, with suggestions for a new kind of inclusive thinking. *British Educational Research Journal, 39*(3), 473-490.

Thomas, G. (2013). *How to do your research project: A guide for students in education and applied social sciences*. London: Sage.

Tillmann-Healey, L., & Kiesinger, C. (2001). Mirrors: seeing each other and ourselves through fieldwork. In K. Gilbert (Ed.), *The Emotional Nature of Qualitative Research.* Florida: CRC Press LLC.

Tuckett, A. G. (2005). Applying thematic analysis theory to practice: A researcher's experience. *Contemporary Nurse, 19*(1-2), 75-87.

Tudge, J. R., Mokrova, I., Hatfield, B. E., & Karnik, R. B. (2009). Uses and misuses of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development. Journal of Family Theory & Review, 1(4), 198-210.

TUIK (2015) Turkiye İstatistik Kurumu [Turkish Statistics Institute], *"Main Statistics: Population and Demography".* Retrieved June 12, 2015, from http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist.

Turkish Constitution, (1982). Retrieved on October 4, 2013, from http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/1982constitution-eyasar.htm

Turkish Disability Act (2005), Law on Disabled People and on Making Amendments in Some Laws and Decree Laws, Law No: 5378 (Engelliler Hakkinda Kanun, no: 5378). Retrieved June 12, 2015, from http://www.refworld.org/docid/4c445e652.html.

Turmusani, M. (2008). Disabled women in Islam: middle eastern perspective. *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health, 5*(2-3), 73-85. (Published online: 13 Oct 2008)

Ubuz, B., & Sarı, S. (2008). Sınıf öğretmeni adaylarının öğretmenlik mesleğini seçme nedeni ([Underpinning reasons of becoming teachers for primary school teachers' candidates]. *Pamukkale Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* [*Pamukkale University, Journal of Educatıon Faculty*]*, 2*(24), 113-119.

Ulin, P., Robinson, E. T., & Tolley, E. E. (2005). *Qualitative methods in public health: A field guide for applied researchers.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

UNESCO (1994*). The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*. Paris: UNESCO.

United Nations. (1990). *Conventions on the rights of the child.* New York. Retrieved from http://www2ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc.pdf

Ünlü, P., Pehlivan, D., & Tarhan, H. (2010). Ortaöğretim Kurumlarında Öğrenim Gören Görme Engelli Öğrencilerin Fizik Dersi Hakkındaki Düşünceleri [The Thoughts of Secondary School Pupils with Visual Impairments Regarding their Physics Classes]. *Gazi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi* [*The Journal of Gazi Education Faculty (GUJGEF)*]*, 30*(1), 39–54.

Van Manen, M. (1997). From Meaning to Method. *Qualitative Health Research, 7*(3), 345-369.

Vos, T., Flaxman, A. D., Naghavi, M., Lozano, R., Michaud, C., Ezzati, M., & Abraham, J. (2013). Years lived with disability (YLDs) for 1160 sequelae of 289 diseases and injuries 1990–2010: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2010. *The Lancet, 380*(9859), 2163-2196.

Wagner, M., D'Amico, R., Marder, C., Newman, L., & Blackorby, J. (1992). *What happens next: trends in postsecondary outcomes of youth with disabilities.* Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

Watts, J. (2008). Emotion, empathy and exit: Reflections on doing ethnographic qualitative research on sensitive topics. *Medical Sociology Online, 3*(2), 3-14. Retrieved January 5, 2013, from http://oro.open.ac.uk/10901/1/jhwatts.pdf

Webster, A., & Roe, J. (1998). Children with visual impairments: Social interaction, language and learning. Psychology Press.

Wiener, W. R., & Sifferman, E. (2010). The history and progression of the profession of orientation and mobility. Foundations of orientation and mobility: History and theory, 486-514.

Wiener, W. R., Welsh, R. L., Blasch, B. B., Pogrund, R., Sewell, D., Anderson, H., & Roberson-Smith, B. (2010). *Foundations of Orientation and Mobility (O&M).* American Foundation for the Blind.

White, J. (2003). State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman. *NWSA Journal, 15*(3), 145-159.

Whitten, E., & Zebehazy, K. (2003). Collaboration between special schools and local education agencies: A progress report. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 97*(2).

WHO (2001). *World Health Organisation, International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF).* Retrieved on October 11, 2013, from http://www.who.int/classifications/icf/en/

WHO (2015). World Health Organisation, International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems 10th revision. Retrieved June 12, 2015, from http://apps.who.int/classifications/icd10/browse/2015/en#/H54.0

WHO (2015a). World Health Organization, Visual impairment and blindness: Fact Sheet No282. Available from: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs282/en/

Wiener, W. R., Welsh, R. L., & Blasch, B. B. (2010). Foundations of orientation and mobility. American Foundation for the Blind.

Wiener, W. R., Welsh, R. L., & Blasch, B. B., (2010). *Foundations of Orientation & Mobility: Volume 2.* American Foundation for the Blind.

William, A & Silverman, M. D. (2002) *Retrolental Fibroplasia: A Modern Parable*. Retrieved on October 3, 2014, from http://www.neonatology.org/classics/parable/

Williams, S. J. (1999). Is anybody there? Critical realism, chronic illness and the disability debate. *Sociology of Health & Illness, 21*(6), 797-819.

Wolffe, K. E., Ajuwon, P. M., & Kelly, S. M. (2013). A quantitative analysis of the work experiences of adults with visual impairments in Nigeria. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 107*(6), 411.

Wolffe, K., & Kelly, S. M. (2011). Instruction in areas of the expanded core curriculum linked to transition outcomes for students with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 105*(6), 340.

Wolffe, K., Sacks, S., Corn, A., Erin, J., Huebner, K., & Lewis, S. (2002). Teachers of students with visual impairments: What are they teaching?. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness, 96*(5), 293–304.

Wolffe, K.E., & Sacks, S. Z. (1997). The social network pilot project: Lifestyles of students with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness. 91*(5), 245-257.

Worth, N. (2013). Making friends and fitting in: a social-relational understanding of disability at school. *Social & Cultural Geography, 14*(1), 103-123.

Yazıcı, F., Okçu., & Sözbilir, M. (2015). Ailelerin görme engelli çocuklarına yönelik gelecek kaygıları [Concerns of parents regarding future of their children who have a visual

impairment]. *Ege Eğitim Dergisi* [*Journal of Aegean education*]*, 16*(1), 142-164. [In Turkish]

Yurdakul, G. (1999). *Construction of honor: Reflections on women's status in Turkey.* Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey.

Zhou, L., Parker, A.T., Smith D.W., & Griffen-Shirley N. (2011). Assistive technology for students with visual impairments: challenges and needs in teachers' preparation programs and practice. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 105*(4), 197-210.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Information sheet for study 1

Study Title

An exploratory study into the reflections of the educational experiences and outcomes of twelve young adults with visual impairments in Turkey

Who are we?

We are a group of researchers linked to the University of Birmingham working on education of people with visual impairment. In this study we particularly are interested in experiences of people with visual impairments when they were in compulsory school and its influences on their current life.

Invitation to take part in this research study

We would like to invite you to take part in our research study. Before you decide if you want to join in we would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with your family, and friends if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

The terms “additional curriculum” or “expanded core curriculum” are used in the field of visual impairment education to include areas which would not typically be taught in schools as part of the core curriculum, e.g. mobility skills, independent-living skills, access technology skills. Literature often identifies difficulties in curriculum access as being a key barrier experienced by visually impaired students (e.g. Douglas et al., 2009).

This exploratory study seeks to explore the perspectives of visually-impaired people in order to determine how the balance between access to the “core curriculum” and the “additional curriculum” is achieved in Turkey. Specifically the interviews aiming to explore recollections of educational experience curriculum balance at the compulsory school, educational outcomes and “preparedness” for life beyond school (including links to your current situation) and views about rights, responsibilities and individualised and social explanations of disability as well as reflections upon how education should have been. Also results of this study may make some suggestions to educators and policy makers to consider.

Why have I been invited to take part?

We would like to include people with visual impairments who are between age 21 and 35 and live in Kayseri. We think views of people with visual impairments from different backgrounds are essential and would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Do I have to take part?

No, taking part in the research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you and if you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be invited to answer some questions which have been prepared to explore your educational experiences and views and suggestions education. The interview should take around an hour and a voice recording will also be taken during the interview.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There is no reward or direct benefit for participating in this study but the information we get from the study may help educators and policy makers to improve delivered education of children with visual impairment in the future, and your contribution may lead to essential change.

What will happen if I start to the study and decide not to carry on with it?

You can decide not to continue with study at any time and your data will be destroyed.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Once the study has finished the results from all participants who took part in the study will be presented in a scientific conference and published in a scientific journal. The presentation and publication will appear when all the participants have completed the study and the results have been analysed. Only anonymous data will be presented and published and your name will not appear in any report, presentation or publication. You can be provided a copy of this publication if you are interested.

Who has reviewed the study?

Before any research goes ahead it has to be checked by a Research Ethics Committee. They make sure that the research is fair. This study has been checked by University of Birmingham – Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for reading this – please ask any questions if you need to

You will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep and a consent form to sign.

Contact information

Onder Islek. Tel: [redacted] or [redacted]

Email: [redacted]

Appendix 2: Consent form for study 1

University of Birmingham

This information is being collected as part of a research project concerned with the curriculum-balance experienced by the people with visual impairments in Turkey by the School of Education in the University of Birmingham. The information which you supply and that which may be collected as part of the research project will be entered into a filing system or database and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project. The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research. By supplying this information you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. No identifiable personal data will be published.

Please answer the following:

Did you have a visual impairment whilst you were in the compulsory education?

Yes No

Did you attend to a compulsory school in Turkey?

Yes No

Note if you have ticked the “NO” boxes above you should not take part in this study. If yes, are you willing to participate in this study?

Yes No

You may withdraw from the study at any time. Do you understand this statement?

Yes No

You may ask for your data to be destroyed within three weeks of the interview. Do you understand this statement?

Yes No

Do you consent to take part in this study?

Yes No

Signed by:

_____ Participant’s name _____Signature

In the presence of:

_____ Researcher name _____ Signature

Date _____

Appendix 3: Data collection tool: educational experiences of people with visual impairments and their views on education in Turkey

Introduction

Hello. Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. Before we start, do you have any questions about the information sheet, consent form or anything else?

First of all, I would like to let you know that I am also severely visually impaired and studied and spent most of my life in Turkey. Therefore, please, do not feel any pressure because I am very interested to hear about your experiences at school and how you think it has prepared you for life. I am hoping that this interview will be like a friendly chat between two people who both have visual impairments rather than like a formal examination. Feel free to stop me at any point and ask any question or clarification that you may have.

Is everything clear, can we start?
If not, what would be the best time to do the interview?
Firstly, I would like to ask you two general questions about yourself and then some more specific questions on your independence. Then, at the end of that section, I will read some statements about you and the role of school and ask you to express your view by saying either “Strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “agree”, “strongly agree” or “not sure/ I don’t know”. Finally, I will ask 4 more open ended questions and finish the interview.

1. Could you tell me some information about yourself; basically who are you?

- (Prompt as required: age, attended schools; mainstream schooling, or school for the blind, visual condition, qualifications received, and current employment or degree involved with.)

2. In this interview we are particularly interested in “independence” and what you feel “being independent” means. Have you any thoughts? (Prompt: in what way does this link with your visual impairment? Probe: There is no right or wrong answer; everyone is different; I will be asking more specific questions later.)

-
- Now I would like to ask you more specific questions about your daily life and independence.

Independence: Travel and mobility

(Note to the researcher: the first 2 questions in this section aim to gather info about the current situation and the third question is a reflection on educational experience.)

1. Could you describe how you generally get around on a typical day? (a) Firstly, how would you travel to and from university/work? (b) What about in between lessons/break times? (if the person is NEET, this question will be skipped) (Prompts: mobility aids, mobility training, sighted guide.)
2. Could you describe how you typically get around for some social occasions, for example, if you were to meet up with one of your friends? (Prompts: mobility aids, mobility training, parental support.)
3. Could you describe how you were typically got around inside and outside of school when you were in the compulsory school? (Prompts: independently, parents, mobility aid.)
   - (Note: 4th and 5th questions may be reversed if the person is not confident in travelling independently.)
4. Could you tell me what you think has helped you to give you confidence in travelling independently? Do you have any examples you could share?
5. Could you tell me what you think prevents you from being more confident in travelling independently? Do you have any examples you could share?

(Linked to 4th and 5th questions, Prompt: if the school is not mentioned, how about the school? What was role of school in your confidence in traveling abilities?)

Independence: Independent living

- In the next few questions I'm interested in "Independent living skills". What I mean by Independent living skills is cooking, cleaning the home, shopping and related activities.

1 Could you tell me how much you use independent living skills? As examples, how do you typically deal with cleaning, cooking, and shopping? (Prompts: "not involved, and someone else do it for me", "I do these with help of someone", "I pay someone to do for me", "I do these things independently".)

2 How about when you were attending compulsory school? (Prompts: were you given any chance to do these kind of work at the school or home?)

- (Note: 3rd and 4th questions may be reversed if the person is not confident in performing independent living skills independently)

3 Could you tell me what you think has helped you to give you confidence in performing independent living skills? Do you have any examples you could share?

4 Could you tell me what you think prevents you from being more confident in performing independent living skills independently? Do you have any examples you could share?

- (Linked to 3rd and 4th questions, Prompt: if enough information is not provided on the school's role, how about the school? What was the role of school in your confidence in these skills? (Such as, any training or opportunities to practise these skills)

Independence: Access to information and assistive technology

- Now I will ask some questions on access to information and assistive technology.

1. Could you tell me about how you would normally go about accessing information for a workshop, or leisure reading? (Prompt: use of computers, visual access to print) and what about daily life, for example if a friend wanted to share some written information with you, how would you typically access it? (Prompt: use of mobile technology/phones)
2. Could you tell me about how you would normally access information in a lesson/lecture when in compulsory school? (Prompt: use of computers, visual access to print, Braille)
3. Could you tell me how you would ideally like to access information in a workshop/presentation and leisure reading? (Key concept to ascertain – the use of technology vs pre-prepared hard copy by others)

(Note: 4th and 5th questions may be reversed if the person is not confident in using assistive technology independently.)

4. Could you tell me what you think has helped you to give you confidence with using assistive technology? Do you have any examples you could share?
5. Could you tell me what you think prevents you from being more confident in using assistive technology? Do you have any examples you could share?

- (Linked to 4th and 5th questions, Prompt: if enough information is not provided on the school's role, how about the school? What was role of school in your confidence in these skills? (Such as, any training or opportunities to practise these skills)

Independence: Self-advocacy

Now I would like to ask you some questions on self-advocacy; some of the questions are statements and you will be asked how much you disagree or agree with them.

1. How much do you agree with this statement? “If I had a new lecturer/manager, I would be able to confidently explain to them about my visual impairment and the support that I need in the classroom or work.”

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure/I don’t know

2. If you were to speak to the teacher/manager, what would you say to them? Do you have any examples where this has happened in the past? How frequently in the past have you done this?
3. Imagine that, as part of the responsibilities of your job you needed to read through some written material. How much do you agree with this statement? “I am confident that I would be able to discuss any adjustments that I may require in order to access this written material.”

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure/I don’t know

4. What do you think you would say? Do you have any examples where this has happened in the past?
5. Evidence suggests many employers assume blind and partially-sighted people cannot perform certain employment-related tasks because of their sight loss. Imagine you faced that kind of person, How much do you agree with this statement? “I am confident to discuss with a potential employer the skills I have which challenge these views”.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Sure/I don’t know

6. What would you like to say in response to this? (If confident) What do you feel has given you the confidence to deal with situations like this? (If not confident) Could you tell me what you think prevents you from being more confident in this? Do you have any examples you could share?
   - (Prompt: if enough information is not provided on school role, how about the school? What was role of school in your confidence in these skills?)

Independence: Personal view (this section is aiming to collect information about their current feelings)

- I am now going to ask you a series of shorter questions related to questions you just answered. For each statement would you say whether you “Strongly Disagree”, “Disagree”, “Agree”, “Strongly agree”, or “Not Sure”.

•	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not sure
It has always been my expectation that I will receive material in my preferred format when in lessons/lectures/work					
I am able to travel					

independently around my university/work					
I am able to use computers to be able to access any print independently					
I have been well equipped with additional life skills that I will need, such as mobility training and assistive technology skills					
The support I received in school helped me to become as independent as possible.					
I am confident in travelling independently from my home to local shops and other places local to where I live.					
I chose a career based on my interests and talents.					
I am able to adapt to receiving workshop/lesson material in a format which might not necessarily be my preferred one.					
If I had a new lecturer/manager, I would be able to confidently explain to them about my visual impairment and the support that I need in the classroom/work					
I am confident in travelling independently to places which are unfamiliar to me.					
I am confident that I would be able to discuss any adjustments than I may require in order to be able to access a computer in the					

workplace					
I am confident that I would be able to discuss any adjustments that I may require in order to access written material in the workplace					

Views on role of school

- I would now like to ask you some questions about what you think the role and priorities of teachers and schools for students with visual impairments should be. We have some statements and would like you to say whether you "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Agree", "Strongly agree" or "Not Sure" with each statement in turn. We have around 18 statements and then four open ended questions to finish the interview, would you like to have a short break? (if not), Let's start then?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not sure
Providing young people with visual impairments with material in their preferred print size or format is essential.					
Staff need to help visually-impaired students in moving around their school/college safely and quickly					
It is important to teach young people with visual impairments (who are not totally blind) to use magnifiers as these enable them to access any print independently					
More time should be spent teaching independent access technology to young children with visual impairment (computers and mobile technology)					
Young people with a visual impairment					

should be taught to be able to access a range of print sizes and presentations, which might not necessarily be their preferred format.					
The priority of teachers should be to support visually impaired students to achieve the highest possible grades.					
Teachers should ensure students have all the teaching material in a format which best suits them.					
Helping students with visual impairments develop independence skills which they will use later on in life should be prioritised ahead of supporting the students in their classes.					
More time should be spent teaching visually-impaired young people to travel independently around their school.					
More time should be spent teaching visually-impaired young people to travel independently outside of school					
It is more important for teachers to teach visually-impaired young people skills to be able to independently access information than to produce all materials in the students preferred format.					
More time should be spent teaching					

social skills to students with visual impairments.					
Schools should give more opportunities to students in order to allow them to be self-confident.					
More time should be spent on teaching independent living skills to students with visual impairments.					
Schools should teach more games and sports to students with visual impairment					
More time should be spent teaching students with visual impairments how to use vision (if they have any), hearing, touch, and smell for accessing information.					
Students with visual impairments should not be given knife or other kitchen tool to make sure they do not injure themselves.					
Students with visual impairments should be introduced to possible jobs and supported according to their interest area.					
Schools should choose a job for each student with visual impairment and prepare them for that job.					

Summing Up

1. Could you tell me how the curriculum balance of the education you received was, such as time spent on academic curriculum verses other training addressing your visual impairment, such as travelling, independent living, assistive technology, and how have this curriculum balance influenced your life?

2. What do you think are some of the barriers in receiving training on these skills (independent living, travel, assistive technology, and others) and what would you suggests to educators to improve the education of students with visual impairments?
3. During your life, you have been graded by the educators, now which grade would you give for the education you received and why? (out of 100)
4. Do you have anything else to say about the challenges you face in daily life and reasons of these challenges? Or anything you think may be important? (Environmental barriers, perceptions of the society, lack of training, lack of self-determination…etc.)
    -
    - Thank you very much for participating in this study and giving your time. Again if you would have any concern, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor. Our contact information is listed in the information sheet which you already given.

Appendix 4: Information sheet for study 2

Study Title

The views of educators serving people with visual impairments on the balance of the school curriculum, preparation for life and independence of people with visual impairments in Turkey.

Who am I?

My name is Onder Islek and I am a PhD student at the University of Birmingham and I have a visual impairment. I am interested in the curriculum balance achieved in Turkey for students with visual impairments. I am particularly interested in your views and experiences as an educator in relation to the role of the school in developing the independence of students with visual impairments.

Invitation to take part in this research study

I would like to invite you to take part in our research study. Before you decide if you want to join in I would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the study?

The term “additional curriculum” is sometimes used in the field of visual impairment education to include areas which would not typically be taught in schools as part of the “core curriculum”, e.g. mobility skills, independent-living skills, and access technology skills. This study seeks to explore the perspectives of educators who serve students with visual impairments in order to determine how the balance between access to the “core curriculum” and the “additional curriculum” is achieved in Turkey. Specifically the interviews aim to explore existing curriculum balance at compulsory school, enablers and barriers in teaching the additional curriculum, educational outcomes and “preparedness” for life beyond school as well as reflecting upon how education should be. It is hoped that the results of this study will make some suggestions to educators and policy makers to consider.

Why have I been invited to take part?

We would like to include educators who are working in different settings with students who are visually impaired. We think views of educators who are serving students with

visual impairments from different backgrounds are essential and would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Do I have to take part?

No, taking part in the research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you and if you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be invited to rank some statements which have been prepared to explore your thoughts on working with students with visual impairments. Responding to this questionnaire will take approximately five minutes. Afterwards, you will be invited to participate in a face-to-face interview. During the interview, you will be asked to answer questions which have been prepared to explore your thoughts on teaching visually-impaired young people. The interview may take around 45 minutes and I would like to record it.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There is no payment for participating in this study but the information we get from the study may help policy makers to improve education of children with visual impairment and working conditions of the educators in the future. Hopefully, you will also find the chance to discuss your work interesting and of benefit.

What will happen if I start to the study and decide not to carry on?

You can decide not to continue with study at any time and your data will be destroyed if the study has not been presented or published. If you decide not to continue to interview, your data will be destroyed immediately. If after the interview is over you decide not to be part of the study anymore, you should contact the researcher within three weeks to make sure that you give enough time for the researcher to destroy your data before the study is published.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Once the study has finished, the results from all participants who took part will be analysed and included in a PhD thesis. Also, the results may be presented in a conference and published in an academic journal. Only anonymous data will be used,

presented and published and your name will not appear in any report, presentation or publication. You can be provided a copy of this publication if you are interested.

Who has reviewed the study?

Before any research goes ahead it has to be checked by a Research Ethics Committee at the University of Birmingham. They make sure that the research is appropriate and ethical. Furthermore, the study has been agreed by the Turkish Ministry of National Education.

Who can I contact if any issue or need has arisen?

My contact information is at the bottom of this page, and you can contact me for any question or concern. However, if anything happens and you do not feel comfortable talking to me about it, or you want to talk to someone who is in a higher position then me, you can always contact **Dr Graeme Douglas**, who is one of the supervisors of this study. His contact information is at the end of this page.

Thank you for reading this – please ask any questions if you need to
You will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep and a consent form to sign.

Contact information

Onder Islek

Tel:

Email:

Address: University of Birmingham, School of Education, Room G05. Edgbaston, Birmingham. B15 2TT, United Kingdom.

Dr Graeme Douglas

Tel:

Email

Address: Room 141 School of Education, University of Birmingham. Edgbaston, Birmingham. B15 2TT, United Kingdom.

Appendix 5: Consent form for study 2

This information is being collected as part of a research project concerned with the curriculum balanced achieved in Turkey by the School of Education at the University of Birmingham. The information which you supply and that which may be collected as part of the research project will be entered into a filing system or database and will only be accessed by authorised personnel involved in the project (Research student: Onder Islek; and Supervisors: Dr Graeme Douglas and Professor Mike McLinden). The information will be retained by the University of Birmingham and will only be used for the purpose of research. By supplying this information you are consenting to the University storing your information for the purposes stated above. The information will be processed by the University of Birmingham in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act. No identifiable personal data will be published.

Please answer the following:

Are you willing to participate in this study?

Yes No

You may withdraw from the study at any time. Do you understand this statement?

Yes No

You may ask for your data to be destroyed within three weeks of the interview/group discussion. Do you understand this statement?

Yes No

Do you consent to take part in this study?

Yes No

Signed by:

_____ Participant's name _____Signature

In the presence of:

_____ Researcher name _____ Signature

Date _____

Appendix 6: Interview schedule for second study:

The views of educators serving people with visual impairments on existing curriculum balance, preparedness to life and independence of the people with visual impairments in Turkey.

Introduction

Hello. Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. From my pilot study I estimate that the interview will probably take us about 45–50 minutes.

Before we start, do you have any questions about the information sheet, consent form or anything else?

I am very interested to hear about your experiences at schools/RAMs and your views on education (teaching) delivered to students with visual impairments. Please, feel free to stop me at any point and ask any question or clarification you may have.

Is everything clear? If so, can we start?

If not, I will try to answer any questions you have. If you prefer we can arrange for another time to do the interview?

Background

1. Could you tell me some information about yourself; basically who are you? (Prompt as required: age, attended schools; degrees and certificates, in-service training on visual impairment, work experiences; Positions and things you were responsible for?)
2. Could you please tell me how you ended up teaching students with visual impairment? And how do you feel about doing this job?

Independence and additional curriculum

1. What is the first thing that comes into your mind when you hear the term “the additional curriculum”? (Probe, the additional curriculum covers some skills for everyday life. Generally, typical developing children can learn these skills incidentally, but children with visual impairment need to be taught these skills, such as social skills, Orientation and Mobility, independent living skills etc…)
2. What do you think about the independence of people with visual impairments and the role of education (school) on the development of independence?

Independence: Travel and mobility

Now I would like to ask more specific questions about your students’ independent travelling. If you are teaching more than one student, it would be appreciated if you could consider your average student and answer the questions based on them.

1. Could you describe how your students with visual impairments generally get around on a typical day? (a) Travel to and from home? (b) In between lessons/break times? (c) How about on social occasions, for example, if they need to meet up with one of their friends? (Prompts: mobility aids, mobility training, sighted guide).
2. Could you tell me what you think has helped your students to give confidence in travelling independently?
3. Could you tell me what you think prevents your students from being more confident in travelling independently?

(Linked to 2nd and 3rd questions, Prompt: if the school and family is not mentioned, how about the role of the school and family? What is the role of school in developing their confidence in traveling abilities?

4. How do you see the future of your students? How do you think they will be travelling after finishing the school in their everyday life? (Prompts: mobility aids, mobility training, sighted guide).

-

Additional curriculum and schools

1. Could you please think about a perfect educational scenario for a moment which would enable your students to be independent? When you are ready, could you please describe this scenario to me and your role in it?
2. Could you please consider the existing conditions at your institution, and share your thoughts on what is missing from this perfect scenario at the moment and how far it is from reality?
3. Based on the existing conditions at your institution, what do you think should be done to help people with visual impairments reach the level of independence required to participate fully in everyday life?
4. How about people with visual impairments and their families? Do you think they have enough knowledge and awareness about independence and advocate for enough training?
5. What do you think are the consequences of not receiving proper training on the skills covered in the additional curriculum on life of people with visual impairment?
6. Is there anything you would like to add, something you think it is important but I did not ask about?

Thank you very much for participating in this study and giving your time. Again if you would have any concerns, please feel free to contact me or my supervisors. Our contact information is listed in the information sheet which you already given.