Research Article

Journal of Innovative Research in Teacher Education, 3(2), 161-174
ISSN: 2757-6116
http://www.jirte.org
DOI: 10.29329/jirte.2022.464.7
Received: 07/04/2022
Revised: 24/07/2022
Accepted: 14/08/2022

Bibliometric analysis of published research on inclusive education

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Abstract

This study aimed to review the literature on "Inclusive education" in the Web of Science (WoS) database between 1992-2021 and determine the leading trends and progress by using the bibliometric parameters. The bibliometric data were obtained from the WoS database and visualized using the Vosviewer software. The data set was analyzed according to bibliometric indicators such as the number of articles, the top 20 publications, the most frequently used keywords, the cooperation between countries and the distribution of keywords. The analysis results showed a significant increase in scientific research on inclusive education since 2010. The analysis results revealed that the word "Inclusive education" was the most commonly used keyword in scientific research among the 8174 keywords. The USA is the leading country in terms of scientific productivity and the number of published articles. The study findings indicate that "inclusive education" has an important place in education and guidance research and signals the promising future of research in this field.

Keywords:

Inclusive, Education, Inclusive Education, Bibliometric, Scientific.

Cite: Tekin-Bozkurt, A., & Yılmaz-Özturk Z. (2022). Bibliometric analysis of published research on inclusive education. *Journal of Innovative Research in Teacher Education, 3*(2), 161-174. https://doi.org/10.29329/jirte.2022.464.7

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INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education has become a widely used concept of education today. The quest for perfection in the teaching process and significant efforts to provide equal opportunities to every student have contributed to the understanding of inclusive education in teaching (Dreyer, 2017). Inclusive education emphasizes diversity and embraces studies on this approach. Inclusive education is described as an educational approach that proposes schools where all students can participate and are treated like valuable school members (Moriña Díez, 2017). Apart from the disabled and refugee students, many in-need student groups, including those disadvantaged due to war, migration, terrorism, violence, and trauma, are considered under the general umbrella of inclusive education (Dilara & Yıldız). However, inclusive education still does not have a universally accepted standard definition, and there are still debates in the field (Ní Bhroin & King, 2020). When we look at the literature on the progress of inclusive education, we see relevant policies and regulations, student-centered practices, and teacher training programs. The concept of inclusive education was supported by the Convention on the Child's Rights United Nations (1989) and the Standard Rules for Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities United Nations (1993), also, The UNESCO World Conference on Special Needs Education held at Salamanca, in Spain (1994) gave further impetus to the inclusive education movement (Ainscow, 1998).

The UNESCO Salamanca Declaration, held between 7-10 June 1994, was a critical international legal practice in developing an inclusive understanding of mainstream education and offering suggestions accordingly. This declaration addressed the fundamental policy changes to promote an inclusive approach mainly for those with special educational needs (UNESCO, 1994). So, The Salamanca Declaration has an important place in inclusive education as it has implications for children's rights and underlines the learning stages rather than acting like a mechanism (Lindsay, 2003). In many countries, the need for inclusive education is on the rise due to various reasons. In the open file on inclusive education; UNESCO, it is stated that inclusive education does not only meet the educational needs of children with disabilities or students with special needs but also covers many other disadvantaged groups, including children living in poverty, students from ethnic and linguistic minorities, girls, and those from remote regions (UNESCO, 2001). The studies have shown the positive outcomes of legislative changes in inclusive education policies and practices, and the integration of new technologies on the delivery of support services for those with disabilities, especially for university students (Morgado, Cortés-Vega, López-Gavira, Álvarez, & Moriña, 2016). Especially in recent years, there has been an increase in the resources allocated to develop educational policies and the attempts for the inclusion of disadvantaged students in education, for example establishing support offices and the use of new technologies (Moriña, Perera, & Carballo, 2020). If we treat it as a concept, 'inclusion' does not just refer to adopting a program or strategy. It should be considered a standard way of living together so that everyone gains something, feels a commitment to the community, and is valued (Kavkler, Babuder, & Magajna, 2015). From this point of view, the understanding of inclusive education is characterized by creating common spaces that support the learning and development of all students, even if they have different characteristics.

The inclusion of students with special needs in inclusive education is currently being discussed extensively around the world. It is no longer acceptable to place those students in separate schools for special education. It is stressed that inclusive education offers more intensive contact with typical peers and has good effects on the social and emotional development of student with special needs (Koster, Nakken, Pijl, & Van Houten, 2009). Besides, parents with disabled/disadvantaged children might have different reasons for placing them in an ordinary school, and they usually prefer a normal educational environment as it provides more interaction opportunities with peers (de Boer, Pijl, & Minnaert, 2011). Ünal and Aladağ (2020) emphasize that teachers support meeting the needs of students with different characteristics by increasing their involvement the learning process, in addition, they describe inclusive education as an approach that accepts the differences in a classroom environment not as a problem but as an opportunity to enrich teaching. In inclusive education, student groups with many different

characteristics adapt to school. Inclusivity can be accepted as a philosophy based on the concept of social justice advocating the same access to educational opportunities regardless of differences (Loreman, Earle, Sharma, & Forlin, 2007). In this sense, inclusiveness in education is an essential collective process that promotes students' social commitment and socialization skills. Today it is doubtful to maintain conventional teaching approaches due to the increasing number of learners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds with different skills and educational needs. Notably, teachers should adapt to schooling demands in the 21st century and beyond (Dreyer, 2017). In this respect, it would be helpful to consider inclusive education in a broad framework and underline teachers' roles. Although there have been new studies on different aspects of inclusive education (e.g., policies, legislation, regulation, and funding), some problems may be experienced.

Teachers play a crucial role, and teacher training programs and teaching attitudes are of great importance (Pijl, 2010). As a result of the qualitative study on teacher education in inclusive education (Ní Bhroin & King, 2020) it was seen that teachers worked collaboratively, and they appreciated the professional learning opportunities of sharing knowledge and experience. However, it was also found that there were specific challenges such as insufficient time for cooperation and planning, other shortages of other professionals, and communication problems. Research has demonstrated that teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education closely affect many parameters (e.g., the function of education policy in a country, academic support, and the grasp of inclusive education) (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002) Furthermore, students' types of disability (e.g., ASD, CD, and MI) strongly influence those attitudes (Jury, Perrin, Rohmer, & Desombre, 2021). Additionally, gifted students should be treated in the context of inclusive education, and special attention should be paid to those children's emotional and social development (Peterson, 2009). Educators, families, and administrators need to get information about the features and educational needs of gifted children just like they know the characteristics of typically developing children (Gür, 2017). Today, following the recent literature on inclusive education being informed about the recent developments in the field is a fundamental issue for both educators and researchers. Thus, we aimed to make a bibliometric analysis of the studies on inclusive education conducted in the last twenty-nine years (1992-2021) and examine the progress under many headings. Bibliometrics has become a popular scientific research method in recent years (Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015). The term was first used to replace the vague concept of statistical bibliography by Alan Pritchard in 1969 (Pritchard, 1969).

Bibliometrics is beneficial for developing a comprehensive overview of leading trends in the field of research and publications (Hood & Wilson, 2001). Moreover, it allows for identifying the most relevant authors to a particular subject. Scientific review studies are characterized by a holistic approach with a broad scope of research and objective analysis (Cardona, Lobo, & Mora, 2002). This research aims to review the literature on inclusive education (in the "Web of Science" database between 1992-2021), which has been a developing educational science field in recent years, using the bibliometric analysis method.

METHOD

Bibliometrics involves a set of quantitative tools to analyze bibliographic data (Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015). Bibliometric analysis is a methodical technique that allows quantitative analysis of the literature and the actions of searching, recording, analyzing, and predicting (Chen, Yang, Yang, Jiang, & Zhou, 2014). It was firstly used in information and library sciences. Then, it was applied to different fields to measure research and development (Chen et al., 2017). This type of analysis is an appropriate approach to address the progress of study fields, including topics and authors, based on the social, intellectual, and conceptual structures of disciplines (Donthu, Kumar, & Pattnaik, 2020).

This research followed the five steps of the bibliometric analysis proposed by Zupic and Čater (2015) (i.e., research design; compilation of bibliometric data; analysis; visualization; interpretation). Accordingly, the process was as follows: 1. Gaziantep University Library Database was accessed remotely, 2. WOS (Web of Science) database was accessed 3. A search was done with the keyword "Inclusive education" (restricted between 1992 and 2021), 4. 1367 sources were found (the data collection time: 17.04.2021), and 5. Information mapping and data evaluation were done with the VOSviewer program.

Database

In this study, we used the Web of Science (WoS) database to search for bibliographic information by looking for the keyword "inclusive education" between 1992 and 2021. Database coverage is an important component of a bibliometric study (Thompson, 2018). Clarivate Analytics's Web of Science (WoS) is the world's leading scientific citation search and an analytical data area (Li, Rollins, & Yan, 2018). In this context, we preferred the WoS database as it included more research than other online databases.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was completed on a bibliometric analysis program, "Bibliometric R-package." Data were collected and exported into a bibliometric R-package for generating descriptive analyzes, statistical graphs, and science maps. R Package is a statistical computing and graphics software by R Core Team and R Foundation for Statistical Computing. It allows for downloading bibliographic data from online databases, performing several analyses, and obtaining accurate and dynamic graphics.
(Bozkurt, 2021).

VOSviewer

This study involves a further graphical analysis of bibliographic data using VOSviewer software. VOSviewer can analyze and visualize bibliometric network data, such as citation relationships between publications or journals, collaborative relationships between researchers, and co-occurrence relationships between scientific terms (Van Eck & Waltman, 2014).

The VOSviewer software (version 1.6.14) was chosen to analyze the correlations between the most prolific countries and the most frequently used keywords (Merigó, Mulet-Forteza, Valencia, & Lew, 2019; Mulet-Forteza, Genovart-Balaguer, Merigó, & Mauleon-Mendez, 2019).

Limitations

We conducted a survey using only the WoS database, a widely used and globally accepted scientific database. Besides, our searches only covered the years 1992- 2021 (The data collection time: 17.04.2021).

FINDINGS

According to the Web of Science (WoS) database results regarding the publications on the term "Inclusive education" between 1992–2021, there were 1367 sources (e.g., journals, books) and 5233 documents which have located under the heading 'Description' (Table 1). Also, of those documents, 3464 were articles, 264 were book chapters, 18 were proceedings, and 140 were reviews which have located under the heading 'Document Types' (Table 1). In addition, we reached the works of 9362 authors. The number of studies (documents) with a single author was 1233, and the number of studies (documents) with multiple authors was 8129 which has located under the heading ' Authors' (Table 1).

The analysis results showed that the average number of citations per article was 5.52. (Table 1). We found only one paper related to 'inclusive education' in 1992, the starting year of our research time slot. However, we reached 731 articles published in 2019, which was the highest number in the field. The data set was limited between 1992 and 2021 (the last search date: 17.04.2021).

Figure 1 point to the rate of raise in the number of articles by years. It started with one study in 1992 and climbed up to double-digit numbers in 2009 (73 articles). We observed a continuous upward trend since 2010. It reached the top in 2019 with the highest number of articles (731 articles). However, there was a slight decrease in 2020 (638 articles). The number of detected articles published until April of 2021 was 113. The reason for this result view in Figure 1 is that the data was collected in April 2021 (17.04.2021).

Table 1. The Main Statistical Information of Inclusive Education Articles in WOS

Description	**WOS**
Timespan	1992:2021
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	1367
Documents	5233
Average years from publication	5,27
Average citations per documents	5,52
Average citations per year per doc	0,7388
Document Types	
Article	3464
Article; book chapter	264
Article; proceedings paper	18
Correction	4
Review	140
Document Contents	
Keywords Plus (ID)	2154
Author's Keywords (DE)	8174
Authors	
Authors	9362
Author Appearances	12722
Authors of single-authored documents	1233
Authors of multi-authored documents	8129
Authors Collaboration	
Documents per Author	0,559
Authors per Document	1,79
Co-Authors per Documents	2,43
Collaboration Index	2,23

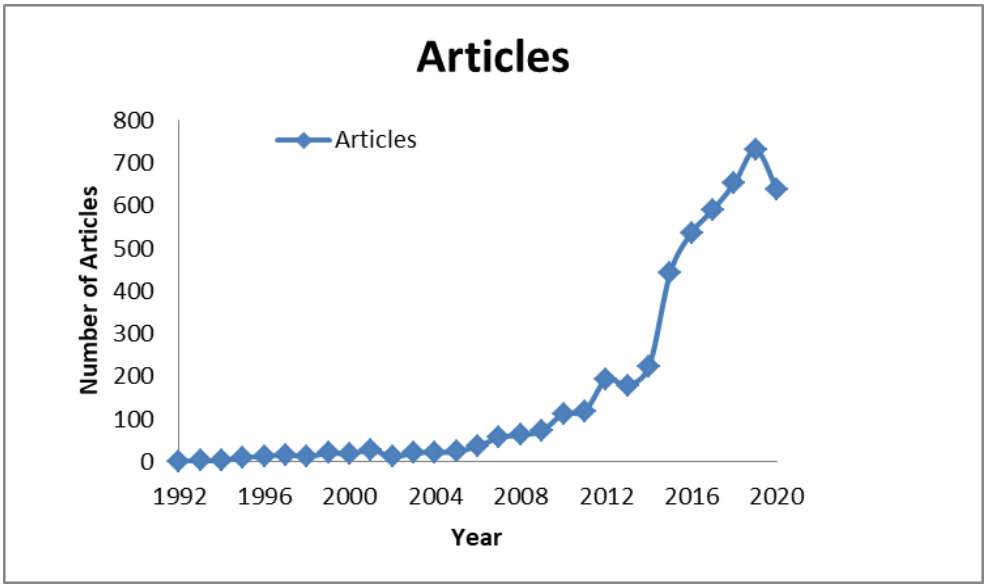

Figure 1. The Number of Articles Published in WoS between 1992 and 2021

In this study, we analyzed the references from the top 20 journals that published the most articles on "Inclusive education" area (Figure 2) and figured the number of articles, h-indexes and total citations (Table 2).

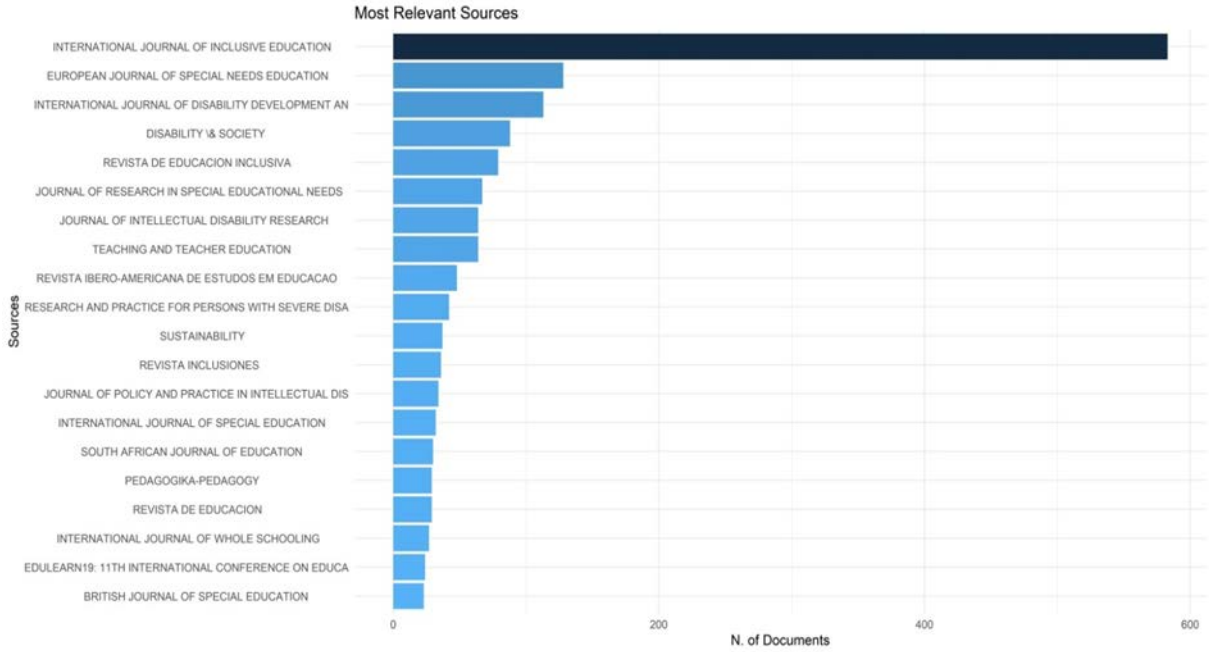

Figure 2. The Annual Publication Patter of the Twenty Most Productive Journals; Web of Science Categories from 1992 to 2021

The tables confirm the impacts of papers despite the novelty and the apparent intensity of those studies in some journals. The "International Journal of Inclusive Education" was the one that published the most articles (583) and received the most citations (5837). Was followed by the "European Journal of Special Needs Education" was the one that published the most articles (128) and received the most citations (1153), "International Journal of Disability Development and Education" and "Disability & Society" was the one that published the most articles (113) and received the most citations (755), "Revista De Educacion Inclusiva" was the one that published articles (79).

The h-index, refers to "high citations" (Bertoli-Barsotti & Lando, 2017). It is a popular index that measures the number of documents and citations (Bertoli-Barsotti & Lando, 2017). The h-index was originally developed by Hirsch, an American scientist, in 2005 to academically evaluate "core scientists" (Bertoli-Barsotti & Lando, 2017). One researcher's h-index shows the number of his articles (h) that have been cited at least (h) times (Bornmann & Daniel, 2007). The h-index has been extensively admitted as a reliable and unique parameter to measure scientific performance (Díaz, Cortey, Olvera, & Segalés, 2016). Firstly, the h-index was an author-level metric that assessed a scholar's or academic's prolificacy and citation impact. Nowadays, it is commonly used to measure the productivity, influence of the scientific journal, country/region, institution, and author. It is the number of an academic's articles (h) that has been cited at least (h) times (Hirsch & Buela-Casal, 2014).

Table 2. The Annual Publication Patter of the Twenty Most Productive Journals; Web of Science Categories from 1992 to 2021. **TC:** Total Citations

No	Source	Article	h_index	TC
1	International Journal of Inclusive Education	583	33	5837
2	European Journal of Special Needs Education	128	16	1153
3	International Journal of Disability Development and Education	113	12	755
4	Disability \& Society	88	19	1085
5	Revista de Education Inclusive	79	3	50
6	Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs	67	8	219
7	Journal of Intellectual Disability Research	64	6	148
8	Teaching and Teacher Education	64	21	1291
9	Revista Libero-Amerıcana de Est udos em Edu cacao	48	2	18
10	Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities	42	17	811
11	Sustainability	37	4	50
12	Revista Inclusions	36	2	14
13	Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities	34	8	153
14	International Journal of Special Education	32	3	33
15	South African Journal of Education	30	10	246
16	Pedagogical-Pedagogy	29	1	6
17	Revista de Education	29	5	132
18	International Journal of Whole Schooling	27	4	55
19	Edulearn19: 11th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies	24	1	3
20	British Journal of Special Education	23	4	69

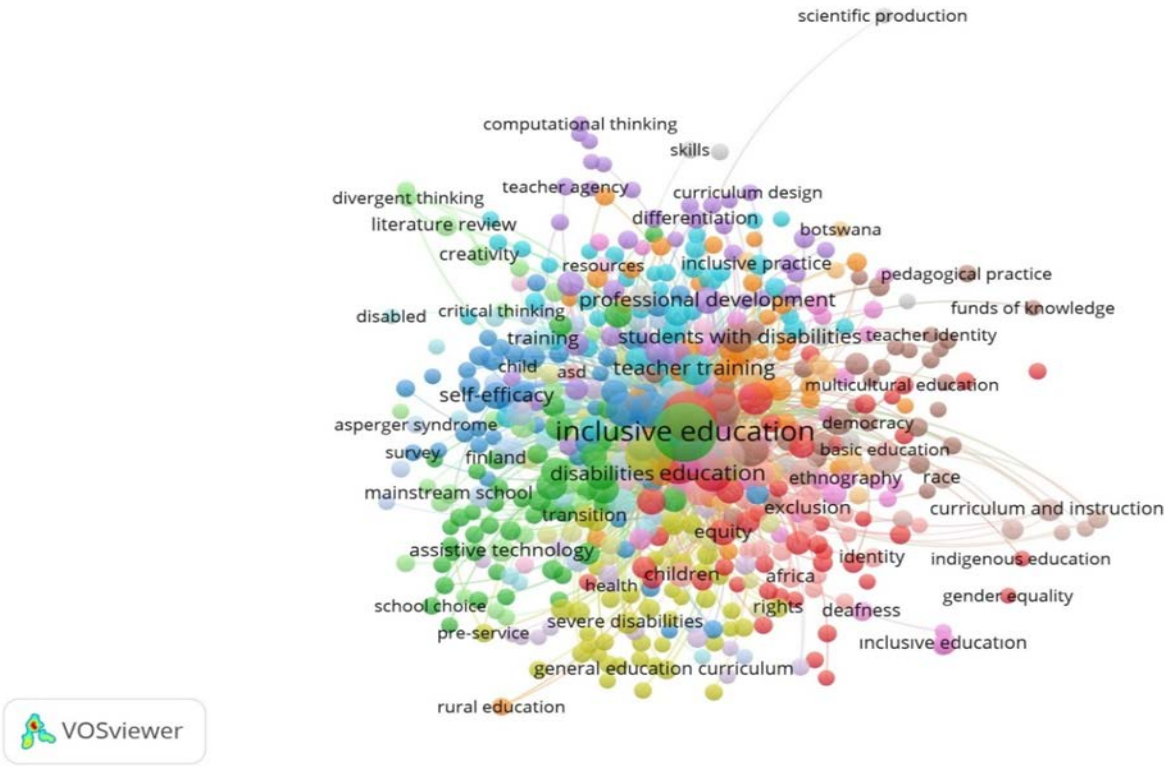

Figure 3. The Most Frequently Used Author's Keywords Between 1992 and 2021

In this sense, the "International Journal of Inclusive Education" ranked first with the highest h-index score of 33. It was followed by "The Teaching and Teacher Education" with the h-index score of 21, and "the Disability & Society," with the h-index score of 19 (Table 2).

In this study, the total number of citations in the journals that published the most articles was 12128 (Table 2), and the total number of keywords used by the authors was 8174 (in Document Contents) (Figure 3).

The density of the lines between the keywords shows the close relations between the words. We found the most frequently used words were "inclusive education, education, and disabilities." It was also seen that the relationship between the term "Inclusive education" and other words were more substantial than others (Figure 3). The top 20 prolific countries, listed by the number of articles, and the dispersion of individual and joint publications by country are shown in Table 3. As seen in Table 3, the USA was the most prolific country with the highest number of articles (583). It was followed by Spain (570), England (431), and Australia (390). However, Spain (531) ranked first in terms of the number of single-author papers. Despite ranking first in productivity, the USA (520) ranked second and the UK (431) third regarding the number of single-author papers. The most collaborative country was Australia (85), despite its fourth rank in article productivity. It was followed by England (77) and the USA (63) (Table 3). Figure 4 shows the individual efforts and international cooperation in article productivity. The Vos viewer map of the co-authorship and diversity between countries revealed the network relations by colors. Large nodes were influential countries. The distance between the nodes and the thickness of the links showed the grade of collaboration between countries. As seen in Figure 4, it is noteworthy that the USA, UK, Spain, and Australia were more prominent than other countries. Similarly, the cooperation network of the same countries was more evident than in other countries.

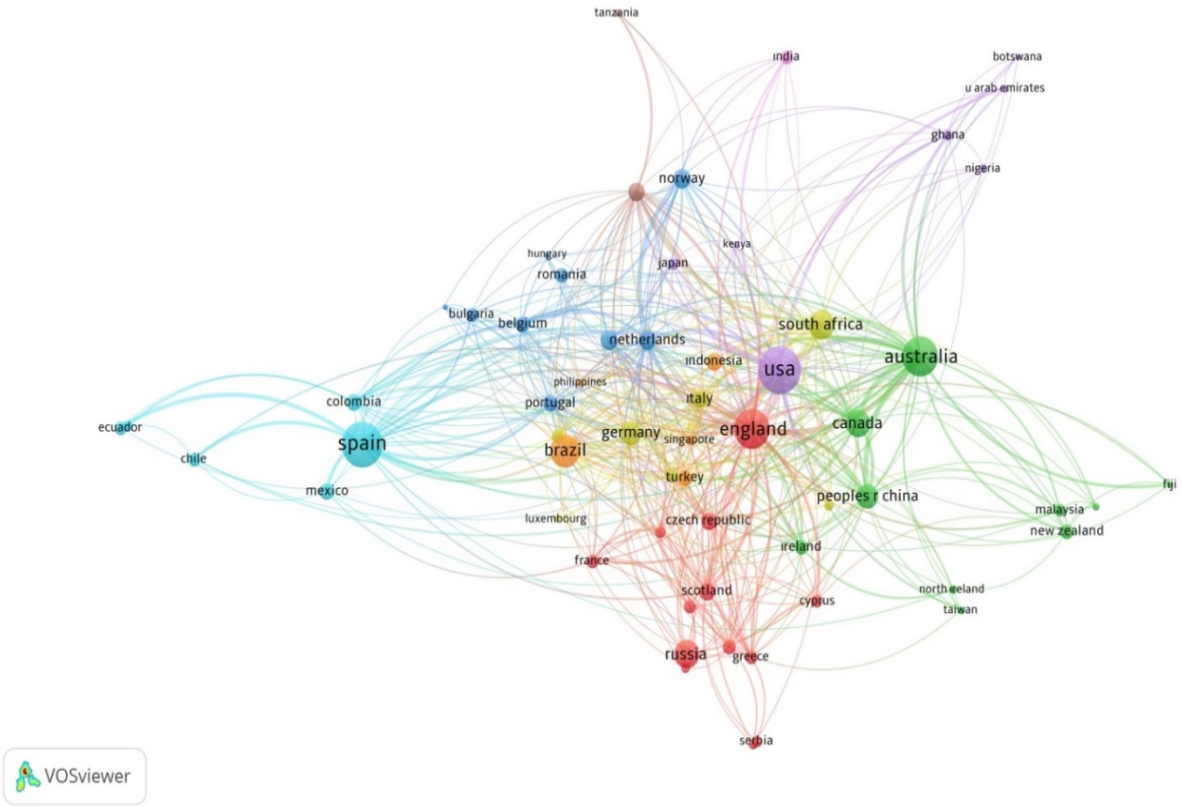

Figure 4. The Cooperation among the Countries

Table 3. Corresponding Author's Country **SCP**: Single Country Publications **MCP:** Multiple Country Publications

No.	Country	Articles	SCP	MCP
1	USA	583	520	63
2	Spain	570	531	39
3	United Kingdom	431	354	77
4	Australia	390	305	85
5	Brazil	295	280	15
6	Russia	205	195	10
7	South Africa	186	166	20
8	Canada	160	137	23
9	China	141	106	35
10	Germany	116	93	23
11	Indonesia	76	71	5
12	Netherlands	75	39	36
13	Sweden	72	64	8
14	Finland	70	38	32
15	Italy	70	58	12
16	Czech Republic	69	64	5
17	Norway	68	55	13
18	Mexico	64	54	10
19	Colombia	58	48	10
20	Ireland	58	46	12

Figure 5 illustrates a color-coded representation of the annual distribution of keywords used in publications (1992; 2021). Figure 5 shows the growth in the use of words related to inclusive education in publications, such as students, education, children, disabilities, experiences, attitudes, school and so on, since 2006. The most intense period for working with these terms, as shown in Figure 5, is between 2014 and 2016. Furthermore, the trend of using these phrases jointly in the following years is worth noting (Figure 5).

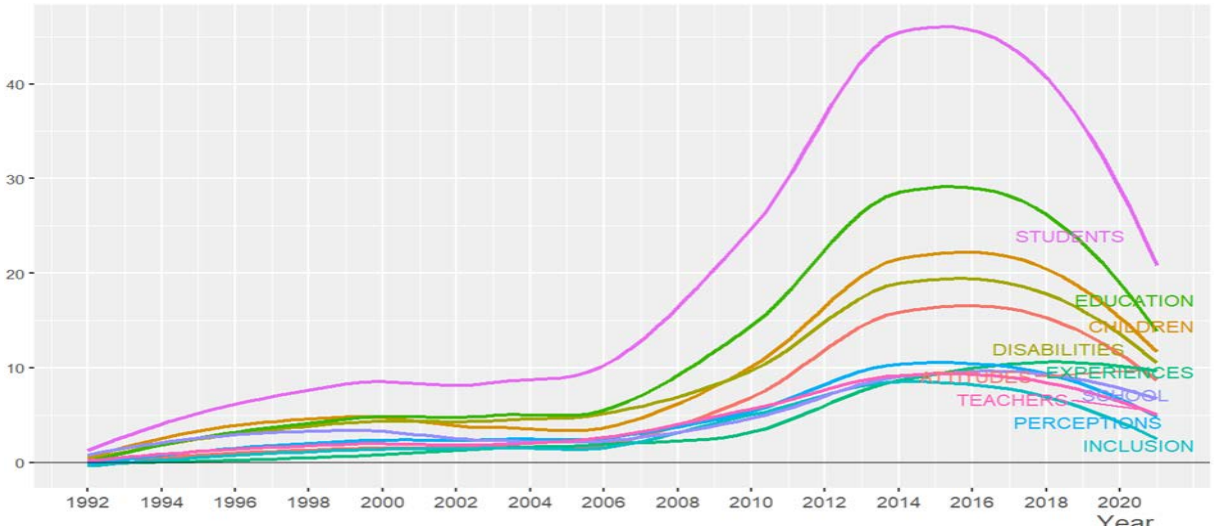

Figure 5. The Annual Distribution of Keywords used in Publications; Web of Science Categories from 1992 to 2021

Discussion

Bibliometric research is critical in providing information about the number of field-specific studies, relevant journals, the structure of the academic field, and the impacts of scientific papers and works. This study described the methodological research trends in the use of 'inclusive education in the last 29 years (1992; 2021) and mapped the bibliometric analysis results by using the Web of Science (WoS) database (the last search date: 17.04.2021). The analysis was carried out to reveal the number of publications, cooperation between countries, scientific journals, the most frequently used keywords, and distribution of keywords. The study results were presented in the graphics and tables.

We reached a total of 6600 works of 9362 authors dealing with the term "Inclusive education" on the Web of Science database between 1992 and 2021 (Table 1). It can be inferred that we analyzed several data, including many documents, publications, and authors in a wide time range. The analysis results showed that the number of multiple-author articles (8129) was higher than studies with a single author (1233), which suggested that many authors cooperated in studying inclusive education and preferred multi-dimensional studies.

We found only one article in 1992, the beginning scope of our research, but it reached the highest number of 731 in 2019. We limited our search to the first quarter of 2021 (113 articles) (Figure1). In light of the findings, we can say that research on "inclusive education" became more available on scientific platforms, especially after 2010. We observed a continuous upward trend until 2019. It proves that "inclusive education" is a current issue in the literature and has an important place in education systems. Education is a much broader concept than skill acquisition. Since the 1990s, especially thanks to the EFA (Education for All) movements, inclusive education initiatives have gained global importance (Miles & Singal, 2010).

The primary elements of the scientific communication system involve journals and publications that integrate scientific knowledge with the academic network. The h-index has a critical pointer to the efficiency and effectiveness of scientific works. This study analysis results revealed that the "International Journal of Inclusive Education" published the most articles on inclusive education (583), had the highest h-index (33), and was the most cited journal (5837). It was respectively followed by the “Special Needs Education”, “International Journal of Disability Development and Education”, “Disability Society" and “European Journal of Special Needs Education”. The number of citations is the basic element that proves the quality of an article (Tahamtan, Afshar, & Ahamdzadeh, 2016).

In this study, we reached 12128 citations on 'inclusive education. This result suggests that the journals are closely interested in inclusive education, and the number of citations increases gradually in parallel with the number of publications. Keywords are extremely important in presenting information about scientific research (Şeref & Karagöz, 2019). In this respect, keyword analysis could help identify terms and concepts specific to a field. We examined the prevalence of the keywords used by 8174 authors on the Web of Science database. The peak three keywords listed on this topic were "Inclusive education" "Education," and "Disabilities". Of all, "inclusive education" had a stronger connection with other words (Figure 3). The keywords identified here would guide future studies. The cooperation between countries and the analysis of academic papers could contribute to studies worldwide. The Vosviewer map included many colors showing the networks of cooperation and diversity between countries. Big nodes represented influential countries. The distance of the links represented the level of cooperation between countries. It was noteworthy that the USA, UK, Spain, and Australia nodes were more remarkable than other countries. The same countries also had more cooperation networks than other countries (Figure 4). Most countries, especially the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada, produce

data on inclusive education (Hernández-Torrano, Somerton & Helmer, 2022). In this sense, we can suggest that they played an essential role in establishing cooperation in inclusive education.

At the end of this study, Figure 5 has presented which is about the annual distribution of keywords used in publications under the title of inclusive education. Figure 5 illustrates a color-coded representation of the annual distribution of keywords used in publications (1992; 2021). Figure 5 shows the growth in the use of words related to inclusive education in publications, such as students, education, children, disabilities, experiences, attitudes, school, and so on, since 2006.

Conclusion

This study provided a general overview of this progress and current research in inclusive education in the last 29 years (1992; 2021). The study's overall goal was to present a comprehensive review of the literature on 'Inclusive education' teams in the WoS database. It is the first bibliometric study on inclusive education in the literature. Therefore, this study can be qualified as an original study in the inclusive education field. Also, this study's findings could guide future researchers as they gave a comprehensive view of the research area and guidelines to better understand the subfields and interrelationships. Besides, this bibliometric analysis study and parameters would bring a different perspective to inclusive education literature and future bibliometric research. In this research, a bibliometric data analysis was performed on publications related to inclusive education on the "Web of Science (WOS)" database between 1992 and 2021. Future research can conduct detailed bibliometric analysis on online databases such as Scopus, Elsevier, EBSCO, and different periods. Future bibliometric studies might focus on dissertations and research projects related to inclusive education and apply different analysis methods and techniques. In light of the study results, it can be inferred that inclusive education is a popular topic of research drawing much academic interest today.

Statement of Researchers

Researchers' contribution rate statement: The authors contributed equally to the article.
Conflict statement: The author declares that he has no conflict of interest.
Support and thanks: None.

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