



Teachers' Attitudes Towards Inclusive Education in Kosovo and the Role of Efficacy

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Annotation. The aim of the study is to understand teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. The study included in total (N = 293) participants. The reported results indicated that teachers in Kosovo have an average score approaching the median point (M = 29.36, DS = 6.30). Moreover, the reported results showed differences between groups of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion [F (2, 290) = 3.831, p = .02]. Experienced teachers who have children with SEN in their classes had a more positive attitudes towards inclusion.

Keywords: *attitudes, inclusive education in Kosovo, teachers, efficacy.*

Introduction

Inclusive education as initially defined by the Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994), refers to the education of all children by having access to regular classes with the assistance of adequate support. Wilson and Michaels (2006) defined inclusion as a purpose for all children to be able to attend their neighbourhood schools, in the general quality educational classes and implement various curricula suitable for their age, guidelines, and evaluations in order to address the needs of all students.

Teachers' attitudes play an important role in creating a positive learning environment, and teachers who have a positive healthy attitude towards inclusion are more likely to succeed in implementing inclusive practices in their classroom (Costello & Boyle, 2013). Therefore, teachers' positive attitude is essential for a successful implementation of inclusive education (Costello & Boyle, 2013). This corresponds with the purpose of this study

in order to observe the teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children with specific educational needs in regular schools, by comparing various teacher' groups that work in special schools, that have children with specific educational needs in their classes and teachers who do not have in their classes children with specific educational needs. At the same time, we will observe the role of self-efficacy in teachers' attitudes towards inclusion.

According to UNICEF (2020), through the 2011/12 academic year, only 33% of the children with specific educational needs were enrolled in schools for this academic year. In Kosovo there are no substantial documented data related to inclusion (Zabeli et al., 2021), though it is reported that good inclusive practices exist when teachers have invested in their training and professional development. Moreover, it is stated that teachers are in need of adequate training in order to work successfully with children with specific educational needs (Zabeli et al., 2020). Simultaneously, teachers in Kosovo believe that inclusion has a positive effect in all children (Zabeli et al., 2020).

The data reported in other countries showed that class and subject teachers scored evidently lower in the median grade that measures a positive attitude towards inclusion. The average results of the teachers of special education schools were above the median grade. About 20% of the teachers were strong opponents of the inclusion, while 8% were strong advocates. The attitudes towards inclusion were weak associations with other variables except with the category of teachers of the special classes (Salovitita, 2020a). Special education teachers' attitudes towards inclusion were significantly more positive than of the teachers of general education, plus teachers' work orientation and self-efficacy were predictors of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Higher levels of self-efficacy were associated with more positive attitudes towards inclusion (Saloviita, 2020b). The results show that positive attitudes of classroom teachers were associated with their feeling that special education classes denote an inappropriate placement for students with specific educational needs, their belief in self-reliance on getting outside help, reliance on their own professional skills, and expectations in additional work-load. (Hernandez et al., 2016).

Alquraini (2012), reviewed other studies that confirmed the assertion that not all the general education teachers and other education professionals favour inclusion. Data showed that the respondents had a slightly negative attitude towards inclusion of the children with disabilities in regular education classes. Only 35% of the respondent teachers were ready to include students with severe learning difficulties in their classrooms. Nevertheless, most of the teachers were open to acquire new skills in better accommodation of the students with disabilities by following on the job educational programs and by applying the new skills throughout the work with students with disabilities (Rakap & Kaczmarek, 2010). Various findings have revealed that teachers do not feel adequately prepared to attend the students with disabilities in the classes of general education (Gaines & Barnes, 2017). Therefore, training of teachers in inclusive practices, the type of students' disability and the sufficiency of available facilities and resources were the most important factors that influenced the teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education.

Karakoidas and Dimas (1998) found out that mainstream teachers had negative attitudes towards inclusion of children with deafness, blindness, serious behavioural problems, and mild mental retardation. Even though they acknowledged that inclusion could potentially enhance the children's social skills, they disagreed with the extensive implementation of the policy until sufficient resources are in place and appropriate training is provided. Teachers who were confident in their support networks and had sufficient access to educational resources, such as an in-classroom teaching assistant, were more positive towards inclusion compared to other teachers (Saloviita, 2020).

Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs are evaluated five times and attitudes (under the level of attitudes and worries) three times during the period of three years. The results showed that both structures are relatively sustainable during the period of measuring. Moreover, self-efficacy had a positive effect over time on both types of attitudes but not vice versa. Results were similar between male and female respondents and between novice and expert teachers. This implies that increasing teacher efficacy for inclusive practices is likely to change their attitudes toward positive courses (Savolainen et al., 2020). Teachers with greater classroom management self-efficacy or greater instructional strategies self-efficacy had greater job satisfaction and felt more comfortable teaching all types of students (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). In specific situations or in order to fulfil a duty, it was enabled the teachers to control the events in their lives and they used their necessary skills to achieve the wanted success (Epstein & Willhite, 2015).

The evidence of the research suggests that global teacher-related factors that contribute to attitudes towards inclusion are age, gender, the level of the taught grade, teacher training, teacher efficacy, and previous experience with people with disabilities (Akalin et al., 2014; Alquraini, 2012; Amr et al., 2016; Cwirynkalo et al., 2017; Forlin & Chambers, 2011; Monsen et al., 2013; Nketsia et al., 2016). Teachers' gender and their attitudes towards inclusion were identified in the research as an important factor that contributes to teachers' perception of the inclusion (Alquraini, 2012; Priyadarshini & Tahngarajathi, 2016; Sandhu, 2017; Vaz, etc., 2015).

Male teachers were generally more negative towards inclusion than female teachers, yet, research does not indicate whether these results reflect the attitudes towards the concept of inclusion or the actual reality of inclusive practice (Priyadarshini & Tahngarajathi, 2016; Sandhu, 2017; Vaz, etc., 2015). Female teachers have a more positive attitude towards inclusion because of their tolerance and stronger attitude. The results for teachers are mixed, because male teachers had a more supportive attitude towards inclusion compared to female teachers (Dukmak, 2013). At the same time a number of similar researches show that female teachers feel more positive towards inclusion compared to male teachers (e.g., Alghazo & Naggar Gaad, 2004; Alquraini, 2012).

Teachers' age was not an important factor in their attitudes towards inclusion, whereas their experience of many years had a negative impact towards inclusion. Moreover, justifiably teachers' attitudes towards inclusion became more positive when teachers

saw educational placement for students with intellectual disability as a way to become a “regular classroom” (EP4). Furthermore, teachers’ attitudes towards inclusion became less positive when teachers saw educational placement for students with intellectual disability as the “special education classroom in regular school” (EP2) or the “regular classroom with resource room services” (EP3) (Dukmak, 2013). The results of Ross – Hill (2009) showed that most teachers supported the practices of inclusion into regular classes or demonstrated a neutral consensus towards inclusion, since it was related to the teaching duty.

The hypotheses of this research are:

H1: Regular classroom teachers have a lower level of positive attitudes towards inclusion.

H2: There is a positive correlation between teachers’ attitudes and efficacy, and

H3: Female teachers present more positive attitudes towards inclusion compared to male teachers.

Methodology

Participants

The research encompassed in total (N = 293) participants, from which (N = 200 or 68.25%) were female, while (N= 93 or 31.74%) were male teachers with an average age of (M = 49.27, DS = 7.43). Other demographic data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Teachers’ Demographic Data

	Frequency	%		Requency	%
Experience			Classes		
0-5 years	62	21.1	Classes with no SN children	149	50.7
6-11 years	56	19.0	Classes with SN children	97	33.0
Over 12 years	175	59.5	Special schools	47	16.0

Instruments

Teachers’ Attitudes towards Inclusive Education Scale (TAIS) - The scale was originally designed to measure teachers’ attitude towards inclusive education, as determined at the Salamanca Declaration (Saloviita, 2015). It consisted of 10 items measured on a five-point Likert scale, starting from “strongly disagree” (marked “1”) up to “strongly agree” (marked “5”), with a neutral midpoint marked “3”. To calculate the total amount, the score of the six items was overturned. Thus, the highest scores show a more positive attitude towards inclusion. The items related to inclusive education were divided into

8 categories and they provided information about the knowledge of specific terminology (inclusive education, integrated education, children with Specific Educational Needs), the practice of inclusive education (projection, implementation and evaluation of educational activities), and prejudices about children with specific educational needs – “Children with Specific Educational Needs should attend special schools”. Participants were asked to rate a Likert-type five-point scale that best suited their beliefs (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree). They were also asked to define some concepts such as inclusive or integrated education, children with Specific Educational Needs, disability, mainstream education, special education system, etc. The reliability of the scale varied between $\alpha = .81 - .90$ in different samples (Saloviita, 2015), while in this research it was ($\alpha = .75$).

Teacher’s Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES) – The 12-point TSES questionnaire provides information on a teacher’s inner feelings about efficacy. Teachers’ self-efficacy was measured using a short 12-item form on the Teacher’s Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). In addition to an overall self-efficacy score, TSES measures self-efficacy in using instructional strategies, self-efficacy in classroom management, and self-efficacy in student engagement. Extensive psychometric testing shows that both instruments are valid and reliable (Cochran, 2000; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Whereas, in this research there was a higher reliability rate ($\alpha = .90$).

Procedures

In order to conduct the research, the selection of teachers was carried in 3 biggest municipalities in the country, which concurrently also were the only municipalities that had special schools for children with Specific Educational Needs. Consequently, a random selection of schools was made in these three municipalities, filling the quota of the randomly selected respondents, whereas the teachers of special schools were taken as a single group, because of a smaller number of schools and the respective teachers. This fact allowed all the teachers that work in these schools to be part of the research, with an exception of the teachers that were against the participation in the research. The filling out of the study questionnaire required maximum 15 minutes. All the participants filled the questionnaire through an online platform and the procedure was carried within a period of one week.

Results

Initially, descriptive analysis was used in order to understand the values of the participating groups in their attitudes and their level of efficacy in the teaching process. The reported results showed that different groups of participants had diverse values of

attitudes towards inclusion. Teachers who had children with specific educational needs in their classrooms had a more positive attitude towards inclusion ($M = 30.77$, $DS = 6.22$). To understand other references, see Table 2.

Table 2
Average Values of Teachers' Attitudes and Their Efficacy Towards Inclusion

	Teachers' attitudes		Efficacy in instruction	
	M	DS	M	DS
Regular classes	26.53	6.52	92.69	10.88
Regular classes with children with specific educational needs	30.77	6.22	97.22	8.19
Special schools	28.06	6.48	94.00	11.29

Primarily, it was tested the first research hypothesis where there is a positive correlation between teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and their efficacy in classroom management. It was reported that there is a positive correlation between teachers ($r = .32$, $P = .01$). Moreover, there was a linkage among other components of the efficacy; refer to Table 3.

Table 3
Correlation Analysis Between Teachers' Attitude and Efficacy

	2	3	4	5
Attitudes				
Efficacy	.32*			
Management of students	.21*	.90*		
Instructional strategies	.24*	.89*	.70*	
Classroom management	.26*	.74*	.74*	.75*

$P = .00$ and $.01$

Further on, the observation was carried out differences between various groups of teachers, involving teachers of regular classes who do not have children with specific educational needs, teachers of regular classes who have children with specific educational needs, and the teachers of special classes. The reported results indicate that there were differences among groups for their attitudes towards inclusion [$F(2, 290) = 3.831$, $p = .02$]. Additionally, the application of the Turkey post-hoc analysis, showed that teachers who had children with specific educational needs had also higher values ($M = 30.77$, $DS = 6.22$), having significant differences from teachers who did not have children with specific educational needs ($M = 26.53$, $DS = 6.52$). The difference was evident also with teachers of special schools ($M = 28.06$, $DS = 6.48$). In addition, the results of Turkey post-hoc analysis indicated that there were significant differences between teachers of regular classes who did not have children with specific educational needs and teachers of regular classes that do have, with a value of ($P = .02$).

Teachers were then classified into three groups: supportive (up to 20 points), neutral (21–39 points), and against inclusion (over 40 points), with the same scoring model (Saloviita, 2020a). However, our group’s average score was higher, these are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
The Classification of Teachers in Level of Supporting in Inclusion

Teacher category	Against		Neutral	Supporting	Total
	N	%	%	%	%
Teachers of classes without CSN	149	8.7	85.01	6.7	6.48
Teachers of classes with CSN	97	3.09	87.62	9.2	86.6
Teachers of special schools	47	4.02	93.61	2.1	6.82
Total sum	294	6.11	87.71	6.82	100

The table shows that the highest percentage of teachers had a neutral attitude towards inclusion of children with specific educational needs in their classrooms, while the highest level of support came from teachers who have children with specific educational needs in their classes ($n = 9.2\%$), whereas other teachers of regular classes who did not have children with specific educational needs in their classes presented a higher level of disagreement for inclusion ($n = 8.70$).

In addition, other demographic factors and their role in teachers’ attitude and efficacy, were observed. The application of the t-test analysis displayed gender differences, though not at the level of significance [$t(291) = 1.743, P = .08$]. Male teachers showed the following values ($M = 31.37, DS = 6.73$), while female teachers showed the following values ($M = 29.15, DS = 6.23$). In the meantime, the t-test analysis showed there are significant gender differences between male and female teachers in their instructional efficacy [$t(291) = -3.228, p = .01$], female teachers reporting these values ($M = 96.02, DS = 9.92$), while male teachers reporting the following values ($M = 89.48, DS = 11.05$).

Other demographic factors analysed the work experience and trainings teachers might have had in relation to children with SEN. The reported results showed there were differences between groups that had received training in working with children with specific educational needs and the ones that did not [$t(291) = -2.121, P = .03$]. Teachers who had received training had a more positive attitude and the following values were reported ($M = 30.05, DS = 6.30$), compared to those who did not receive any training, and the following values were given ($M = 28.49, DS = 6.21$). On the other hand, the t-test analysis showed there were no differences in attitudes between teachers living in a village and those living in a city [$t(291) = .549, P = .583$], whereas, teachers living in a village showed the following values ($M = 29.85, DS = 6.60$) and teachers living in a city showed the following values ($M = 29.27, DS = 6.26$).

Lastly, the observation noticed the role of experience in influencing teachers' attitude towards inclusion. The results using t-test analysis reported significant differences between groups in their attitudes towards inclusion [$F(2,290) = 3.082, P = .04$]. Next, the Turkey post-hoc test analysis showed there were significant differences ($p = .02$) between teachers who had 6-11 years of work experience ($M = 30.96, DS = 6.29$) and those who had over 12 years of work experience ($M = 27.67, DS = 6.52$). In addition, the post-hoc analysis displayed significant differences ($P = .03$) between teachers who had 0-5 years of work experience ($M = 29.85, DS = 5.40$) and those who had over 12 years of work experience ($M = 27.67, DS = 6.52$).

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to observe teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, by comparing attitudes of three groups of teachers towards inclusion of children with Specific Educational Needs as well as examining teachers' classroom management efficacy. The reported results showed that the point median in teachers' attitudes was not reached, which was a slightly higher percentage than that reported by Saloviita (2020). Comparisons between groups showed that regular class teachers who had children with specific educational needs in their classrooms had a more positive attitude than the other two groups, namely special school teachers and regular school teachers who did not have any children with specific educational needs in their classes; in contrast to Saloviita (2020) reporting, showing that teachers of special classes had a more positive attitude towards inclusion.

The indicated results show a more positive spirit towards inclusion of children with specific educational needs in schools, at the same time also understanding alternatively the factors that may influence the inclusion in schools. While, the inclusion of children with specific educational needs in schools remains low, this alternatively, increases the need for more detailed and comprehensive studies towards teachers' attitude, which in a greater percentage were neutral towards inclusion and the ones that in a lower percentage had a supportive character but which to a larger extent were against inclusion. Altogether, this increases the necessity to understand the bigger percentage of teachers with neutral position towards inclusion of children with specific educational needs in regular classrooms, which can lead to penalizing the inclusion of children with specific educational needs in regular classrooms. This however, may be linked to the lack of information on the various physical and mental health problems, since adequate information are shown to be determinant on the attitudes of teachers towards inclusion (Lifshitz et al., 2004; Shade & Stewart, 2001).

The promising fact is that teachers who have experience with children with specific educational needs had a more positive attitude and are to a greater extent more receptive

towards inclusion related to their experience and their probable training in this direction, that was also reflected in this research showing a positive role in teachers' attitudes. In contrast, negative attitudes of teachers towards inclusion of children in regular classes may be linked to the fact that having children with specific educational needs in their classes is more time consuming (Horne & Timmons, 2009), as well as it requires more efforts and training in preparation in working with these children. Together with these variables a powerful predictor of inclusion of children in regular classes is efficacy of teachers, in this research proved to have a positive correlation between teachers' attitudes and efficacy towards inclusion. Moreover, there was a stronger linkage among various aspects of efficacy such as class management, pupils' management, and instruction (Table 3). This fact was also presented in other researches, that efficacy on one side had a positive effect in increasing positive attitudes (Malinen et al., 2012), see also (Saloviita, 2020).

Another significant factor in teachers' attitudes was the teachers' experiences, since those who had an average level of experiences demonstrated a higher level of attitudes towards inclusion. Also, those who had a higher level of experiences demonstrated a lower level of attitudes, also shown in Emam & Mohamed, 2011. Whereas, another important factor is the training related to children with specific educational needs and their management, that have demonstrated to increase the level of positive attitudes, as the comparison between the teachers who had attended training and those who had not shown that teachers who had attended training were more positive towards inclusion, reported also by Dukmak (2013), pointing out that training increases teachers' positive attitudes. Other demographic factors, such as place of residence or gender, were not shown to have any effect on teachers' attitudes, which is not consistent with most research indicating that female teachers have more positive attitudes (Boyle et al., 2013). However, the findings remain mixed, hence the need for more elaborate studies on gender differences and the role of gender in teachers' attitudes.

Limitations

Research limitations are related to the research participants and cannot be generalized, because the research focused on three municipalities where the special schools for children with specific educational needs and other various centres for such children were situated. Secondly, is the discrepancy in the number of participants, having a higher percentage of female teachers and teachers who did not have children with specific educational needs in their classes.

Recommendations

Future studies should extend throughout Kosovo in order to provide an insight at a national level for the values of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. Secondly, an examination should take place in the functioning of the education system and the responsibilities of teachers regarding children with specific educational needs and how this affects their attitudes. As a final point, initiating a program based on the research data of similar researches in order to build strategies for improvement of teachers' attitudes and enhance inclusion.

Conclusions

Teachers in Kosovo display a fair work potential in enhancing the climate of inclusion and hopeful atmosphere for the children, enabled with the increase of more specialized training on class management and working with children with specific educational needs and increasing their participation in regular classes. Teachers with no experience with children with specific educational needs are more reluctant towards inclusion displaying also a neutral attitude towards inclusion in regular classes.

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Mokytojų nuostatos į įtraukujį ugdymą ir jų veiksmingumas Kosove

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Santrauka

Tyrimo tikslas – išsiaiškinti mokytojų nuostatas į vaikų, turinčių SUP (specialiųjų ugdymosi poreikių), integraciją į ugdymo procesą. Reikalingiems duomenims surinkti buvo naudojamos dvi priemonės: mokytojų nuostatų į įtraukujį ugdymą skalė (angl. *Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education Scale*, TAIS) ir mokytojo veiksmingumo jausmų skalė (angl. *Teacher's Sense of Efficacy Scale*, TSES). Tyrimui mokytojai buvo atrinkti trijose didžiausiose šalies savivaldybėse, kurios kartu buvo ir vienintelės savivaldybės, kuriose veikė specialiosios mokyklos vaikams, turintiems specialiųjų ugdymosi poreikių. Visi tyrimo dalyviai (N = 293), iš kurių (N = 200, arba 68,25 proc.) buvo moterys ir (N = 93, arba 31,74 proc.) vyrai. Pateikti rezultatai rodo, kad Kosovo mokytojų balų vidurkis artėja prie medianos (M = 29,36, DS = 6,30), o jų nuostatos į inkluziją yra teigiamos. Be to, rezultatai rodo mokytojų grupių nuostatų į inkluziją skirtumus [F (2, 290) = 3,831, p = 0,02]. Teigiamas nuostatas pirmiausia parodė mokytojai, kurie turi patirties su SUP vaikais, po to specialiųjų mokyklų mokytojai ir mokytojai, turintys SUP bendrojo lavinimo klases. Darytina išvada, kad reikia atlikti daugiau tyrimų, kurie leistų išlaikyti neutralią įsitraukimo poziciją ir leistų mokytojams atlikti tam tikrą vaidmenį, stiprinant SUP vaikų integraciją į ugdymo procesą.

Esminiai žodžiai: nuostatos, įtraukusis ugdymas Kosove, mokytojai, veiksmingumas.

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