Attitudes of Teachers towards Inclusive Education

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Abstract: Over the past years inclusion has become increasingly the focus of many national and international policies of education. Many children with disabilities have become victim to an educational system which is not able to meet their individuals' needs. Inclusive education is a human rights issue. Teachers are very important for positive implementation of inclusive education as compared to children So the main aim of our study was to analyze teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of special need students in mainstream schools in Kosovo. The sample comprised 400 teachers from 20 schools in Pristina, of whom 200 were teachers in primary schools and 200 were teachers in secondary schools who have students recognized as having special needs. For measuring teachers' attitudes was used Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education Scale (TAIS). There was positive correlation between teachers' attitudes, type of school, gender, age and training experience of subjects. The implementation of inclusive education is a complex process that requires, besides the proper legislation, the involvement of various factors in decision – making.
Keywords: disabled students, teachers, attitudes, inclusive education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Disability is a part of the human condition. Almost everyone will be temporarily or permanently impaired at some point in life and those who survive to old age experienced increasing difficulties in functioning. Most extended families have a member with special needs and many non-disabled people take responsibility for supporting and caring for their relatives and friends with disability. Every epoch has faced the moral and political issue of how best to include support children with special needs.

Responses to disability have been changed since the 1970s, prompted largely by the self-organization of people with special needs and by growing tendency to see disability as a human rights issue (WHO, 2005). Historically, children with special needs have largely been provided for through solutions that segregate them, such as residential institutions and special schools. In other settings, persons with special needs were more tolerated and treated incidental ways, while in other cultures they were given respected status and allowed to participate in the fullest extent of their capability.

Policy has now shifted towards community and educational inclusions of children with special needs, so inclusive education is burning issue of the present world. The idea of inclusion has gained victories in other fields. In particular, it has stimulated research of the reorganization of schools to become more welcoming to diverse student bodies (EADCNE, 2012a, 2012b).

Ensuring that children with disabilities receive good quality education is an inclusive environment should be a priority of all counties. For children with disabilities as for all children, education is a vital for their progress and success, but also instrumented for participating in employment and other areas of social activity. In some cultures, attending school is part of becoming a complete person. Hence, teachers are considered one of the key factors to the success of inclusive education. As inclusive education has led to worldwide transitions of educational systems and practices in the last few decades, a vast amount of empirical studies – especially with a focus on teachers and attitudes is available (Mahat, 2008; Oppertti and Brady, 2011; Anderson and Boyle, 2015).

II. WHAT IS A DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY?

The questions of the definition of "person with a disability" and how persons with disabilities perceive themselves are complex. It is no accident that these questions are emerging at the same time that the status of person with disabilities in society is changing dramatically. Question of status and identity are at the heart of disability policy.

Developmental disability is the term for impairments, different functional limitations and restrictions, which can be observed in any person of the society. Functioning and disability are understood as umbrella terms denoting the positive and negative aspects of functioning from a biological, individual and social perspective. Developmental disabilities include:

- Intellectual disabilities
- Sensory - related disabilities (e.g. related to hearing and vision)
- Communication and language disabilities
- Physical disabilities.

The International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health (ICF) recognize that personal and environmental factors, including culture, share a complex relationship with functional capabilities and participation (WHO, 2001). Disability is a part of all human experience, in that every individual will experience some disability at some point over the course of their life. The following issues influence the experience of disability:

- social aspects;
- medical and biological dysfunction;
- cultural and family attitudes;
- availability and access to resources;
- social and legal structures.

According to Danseco (2007) developmental disability can be viewed not as an objective, physical or mental condition, but as a role into which people are placed. People with disabilities are rewarded for behavior that confirms to social expectations associated with the disability role. In this light, as Murphy (2009) point out, disability is defined by society and is given meaning by a culture. Now it is clear that there are various perception of what disability is as there are a variety of cultures.

III. EDUCATING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Over the past years inclusion has become increasingly the focus of many national and international policies of education. Many children with disabilities have become victim to an educational system which is not able to meet their individuals' needs. Inclusive education is a human rights issue. Inclusive education means that all children, regardless of their strength or weaknesses are accommodated in a school and become part of the school community. Inclusive education encourages bringing all students together in one classroom and following the same curriculum regardless of their diversities.

Teachers are very important for positive implementation of inclusive education as compared to children. Teacher's cooperation support and willingness play a vital role in successful implementation of inclusive education program. The Guidelines for Inclusion (UNESCO, 2005) explicitly stated that "teachers' attitudes are important for the vehicles for the construction of an inclusive and participatory society". Positive teachers' attitudes can play an important role for inclusive practices and positive educational outcomes, as it is proposal in the Framework for Inclusive education (Peters, 2004). So the main aim of our study was to analyze teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of special need students in mainstream schools in Kosovo.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our study is based on a descriptive and non experimental causal method of empirical psychological and pedagogical research.

4.1. Research sample

The sample comprised 400 teachers from 20 schools in Pristina, of whom 200 were teachers in primary schools and 200 were teachers in secondary schools who have students recognized as having special needs.

Broken down by age, the largest group of teachers in the sample (75%) was between 26 and 40 years of age; 12% were between 41 and 50 years and 13% were over 50 years old. According to teaching experience 18% of teachers had experience less than 5 years, 32% between 6 to 10 years, 11.5% between 11 to 15 years and 38.5% over 15 years.

4.2. Survey Instruments

The questionnaire contained questions on several demographic background variables. They included: gender, age and years of teaching. Additionally, for measuring teachers' attitudes was used Teachers' Attitudes towards Inclusive Education Scale (TAIS). It is a one-dimensional scale having good to excellent psychometric properties (Saloviita, 2015). The scale was originally developed to measure teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, as defined in the Salamanca Statement. It consisted of 10 items measured by a five-point Liker scale, ranging from 1("strongly disagree") to 5("strongly agree"). To calculate the sum total, the scoring of six items

was reversed. Thus, the higher scores indicate more positive attitude towards inclusion. TAIS has been found to have adequate internal consistency (Cronbach alpha was 0.823).

4.3. Data procedure and data analysis

Data collection tool was administered by the researchers during the summer semester of the academic year 2018-2019. Each respondent was personally invited to complete a paper and a pencil version of the questionnaires. The period for answering the scale lasted 20 minutes.

Statistical analysis of the results obtained in the research was conducted with SPSS 20.0 for Windows package program. The results were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, t-tests and Pearson correlation.

V. RESULTS

Table 1 showed the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents in terms of gender, age and teaching experiences.

Table1. Demographic data of the participants

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	200	50.00
Female	200	50.00
Age		
20 – 30	162	40.50
31 – 40	138	34.50
41 – 50	48	12.00
More than 51	52	13.00
Teaching experience		
Less than 5 years	72	18.00
6 – 10 years	128	32.00
11 – 15 years	46	11.50
More than 15 years	154	38.50

The results indicated that there were significant differences between the scores on teacher's attitudes between teachers from primary and secondary school (Table 2). Teachers in the primary sector were more positive (M=37.06, SD=1.24) compared to their counterparts from the secondary school (M=30.21, SD=1.12).The correlation was at a significant level of $p<.01$. At the same time, the teachers' attitudes from the primary and secondary school had the highest rating in inclusion as value and the children's right (Figure 1).

Table2. Attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education as measured by TAIS

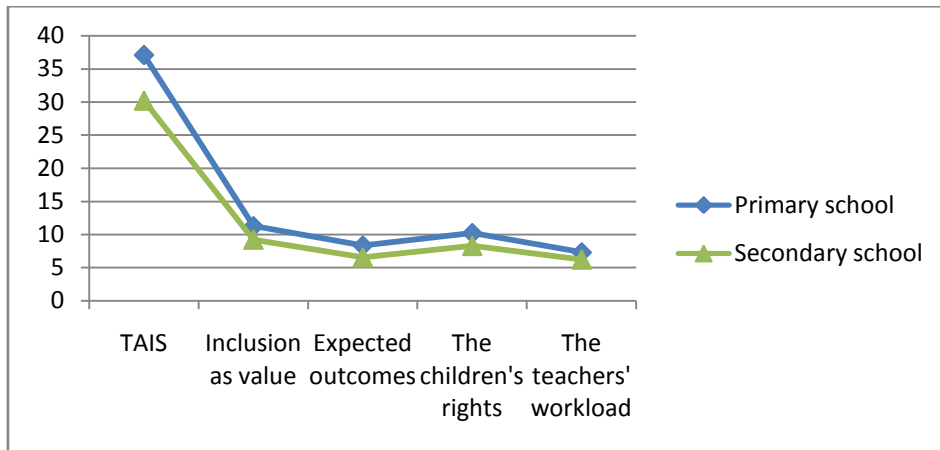| Variable	Primary school N=200 Mean (SD)	Secondary school N=200 Mean (SD)	t – test		
			t	df	p
TAIS	37.06 (1.24)	30.21 (1.12)	2.76	0.56	.01
Inclusion as value	11.24 (0.64)	9.21 (0.76)	1.56	0.49	.05
Expected outcomes	8.32 (0.54)	6.54 (0.48)	1.84	0.32	.12
The children's rights	10.20 (0.70)	8.26 (0.68)	1.72	0.46	.01
The teachers' workload	7.30 (0.64)	6.20 (0.52)	1.64	0.51	.04

Figure1. Attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education as measured by TAIS

Gender differences were measuring by using a t-test. A statistically significant difference was observed between men (N=200) and woman (N=200) in their TAIS scores (Table 3).

Table3. Attitudes towards inclusion based on gender

	Male N=200 Mean (SD)	Female N=200 Mean (SD)	t – test		
			t	df	p
Primary education	31.24 (2.32)	36.58 (3.14)	2.75	0.57	.01
Secondary education	29.18 (1.920	33.21 (2.54)	2.43	0.45	.05

Female teachers felt slightly more positively towards inclusion than male teachers (Figure 2).

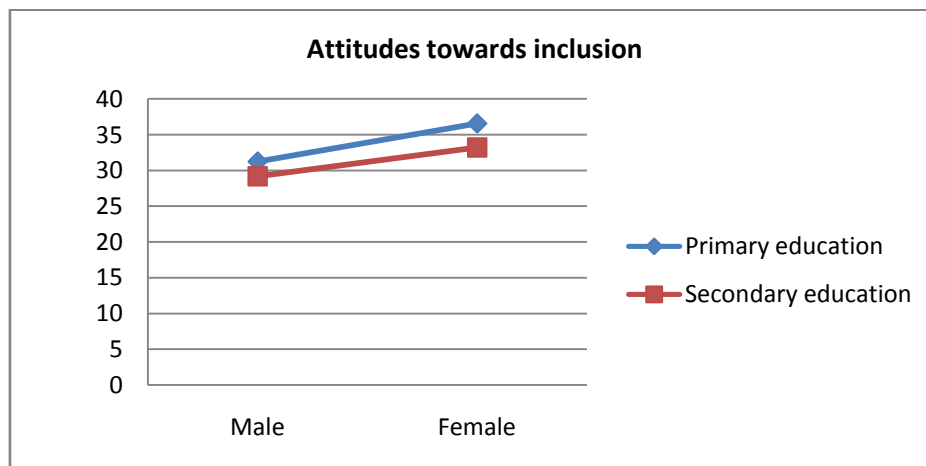**Figure2. Attitudes towards inclusion based on gender**

The age of the teacher was weakly correlated with the sum total of the TAIS scale (r=-.07, p<.01) and the amount of years teaching (r=-.06, p<.05). From Figure 3 we could see that younger teachers were somewhat more positive towards inclusion. The TAIS scores decreased systematically in each older age group, but the differences were not large.
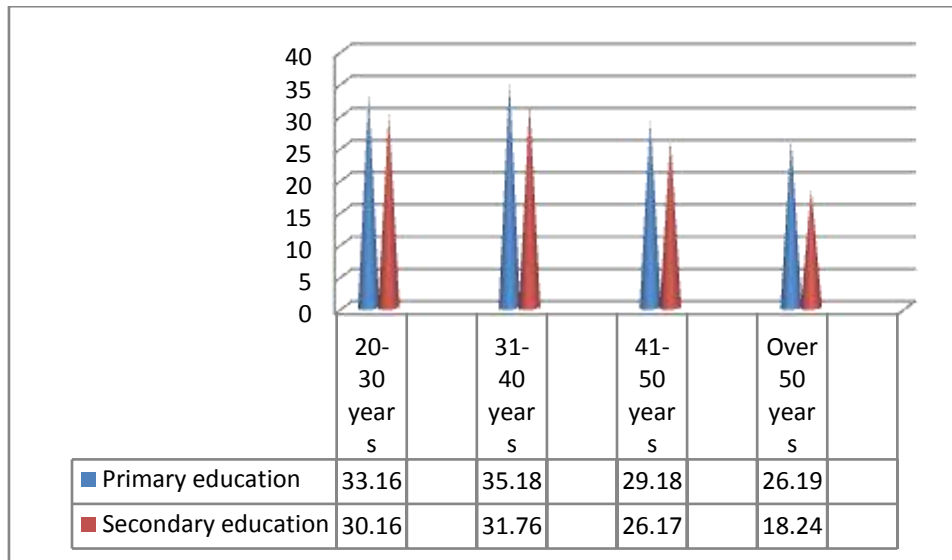
Figure3. Attitudes towards inclusion based on age of subjects

	20-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	Over 50 years
■ Primary education	33.16	35.18	29.18	26.19
■ Secondary education	30.16	31.76	26.17	18.24

Also the evidence suggests that there is effect of years of teaching experience on the teachers attitudes towards inclusive education in the sample (Figure 4).
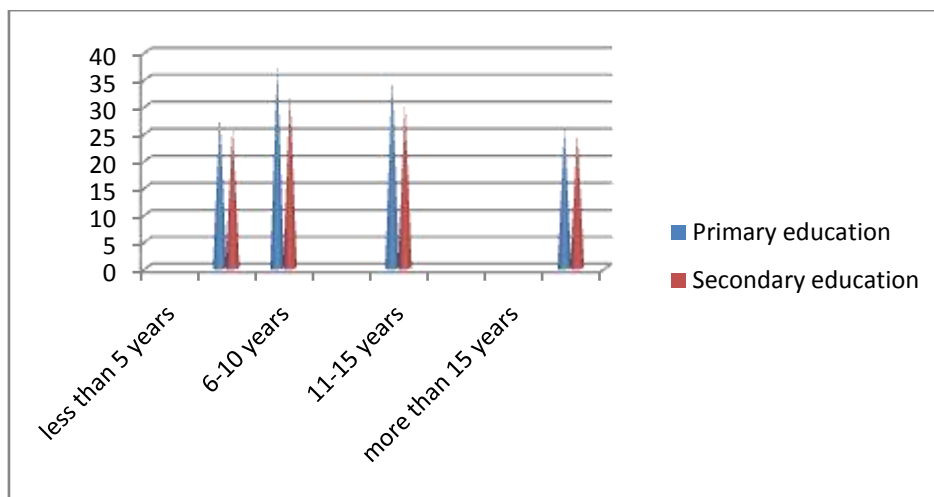

Figure4. Attitudes towards inclusion, type of school and teaching experience

VI. DISCUSSION

This empirical study examined the attitudes of primary school and secondary school teachers towards the inclusion of special need students. Its aim was to determine how their attitudes are affected by the type of school, the teachers' gender, the teachers' age and the teachers' acquired skills in working with special need students.

The results of our study showed that the teachers from the primary school hold significantly more positive attitudes towards inclusive education compared to teachers from the secondary school. The obtained results are similar to the results obtained by other researchers (Bhatnagar and Ajay, 2014; Haug, 2017). Primary schools are commonly ascribed as being more of a small and caring environment with generalist teachers, while secondary schools were larger, academically driven with subject teacher in this way (Ellins and Porter, 2005; Monsen, Ewing, Kwoka, 2014).

The more positive attitudes of primary teachers can probably be attributed their positive personal experience with these students as well as the fact that primary students include more intensive and diverse special needs compared to these seen in secondary school, which exposes teachers to a range of professional stresses and responsibilities. The more positive attitudes of primary teachers towards the provision of adequate support and assistance in educational work, compared to the attitudes of their secondary school colleagues most likely reflect the situation in actual pedagogical practice, since in primary school, special educators are included

in provision of additional rehabilitation assistance to children with special needs, but this do not apply to secondary school (Messiou, 2017; Sharma and Deppeler, 2005).

The next factor that had an impact on the level of teacher agreement with inclusion was teachers' age. The group of the youngest teachers in our study had a more positive attitude towards the provision of adequate support and assistance in educational work than their older colleagues. Studies with a more specific focus solely on aspects of students with special educational need found similar results (Warnock, Norvich and terzi, 2010; Thomas, 2013). Hence, the association of age and attitudes might have different reasons of causes. In general, the majority of teachers around the world have their careers with the current thinking as it pertains to educational concepts (Xu, 2012).

One of the most important factors that have an impact on the successful implementation of inclusion is the teacher's professional teaching experience with students with some kind of disability. Our study had shown that especially the newly qualified teachers hold more positive attitudes to the teachers with experience in teaching practice. Certainly, the role of the teacher in implementing inclusive education process is central (Garcia-Huidobro, 2009) Positive attitudes towards inclusion and good professional teacher qualifications determine the efficacy of inclusion and the success of special need students in school (Ainscow and Miles, 2008).

Furth more, we found that female teachers had slightly more positively attitudes towards inclusion than male teachers. International surveys, support our thinking that female teachers tend to adopt more favorable views toward the inclusion of students with special educational needs. (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002).

VII. CONCLUSION

The implementation of inclusive education is a complex process that requires, besides the proper legislation, the involvement of various factors in decision – making. In this direction, it is considered necessary to hire specialized educational and supportive staff for all school units and to increase this finding for education. At the same time, it is considered necessary to remove stereotyped concepts of the past, in order to limit educational and social exclusion of disabled students.

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