

Attitudes And Self-Efficacy Of General School Primary Education Teachers Regarding The Inclusive Education Of Children With Special Educational Needs In Greece: A Survey In Schools Of The Attica Regional Unit

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Abstract

Since teachers are at the center of implementation of inclusion, it is easy to understand the importance of attitudes (Hosford & O'Sullivan, 2016) as well as how capable they feel to implement it (Fackler & Malmberg, 2016) in the success of educational inclusion. The main purpose of our work is to investigate the attitudes of primary education teachers towards the inclusive education of students with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEN/Disabilities) in general school as well as their perceptions of their self-efficacy as towards inclusion. The research was conducted by distributing a questionnaire to 98 general education primary school teachers, which was constructed based on the research questions. The representation of the research results shows the prevalence of neutral attitudes on the part of teachers towards inclusive education in general and maintaining a low feeling that they can succeed in a classroom based on the principles of education for all. Finally, no statistically significant differences were found in the responses of the participants based on the studied variables.

Keywords: *attitudes, inclusive education, teachers, self-efficacy*

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I. Introduction

Inclusion is now at the heart of educational systems worldwide (United Nations General Assembly, 2015) and is an applied policy to promote changes in all its functions (Messiou, 2017:146–159; Nilholm & Göransson, 2017: 437–451). Inclusive education is based on the principles of social justice and the value of education as a basic human right (Pit-ten Cate & Glock, 2018), which must be provided based on the individual needs of each student (UNESCO, 2020).

Students with special educational needs and disabilities are defined as those who show significant learning difficulties due to sensory, mental, cognitive, developmental problems, mental and neuropsychological disorders which affect the process of school adaptation and learning.

The main factors for the implementation of the inclusive education are the positive attitudes of teachers towards the idea of including students with special educational needs in general education classes (Sharma, Sokal, Wang, & Loreman, 2021) as well as their feeling of high self-efficacy (Boyle, Anderson, & Allen 2020; Wilson, Marks Woolfson, & Durkin, 2020).

Regarding teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, these are of paramount importance to the implementation of inclusive practices (Costello & Boyle, 2013). These concern a person's tendency, belief, feeling to respond positive or negative towards an object/person/idea (Hogg & Vaughan, 2014). A key element of the attitudes are the evaluations which include three dimensions that influence actual behavior (Hong et al., 2014; Seifried & Heyl, 2016; Ruberg & Porsch, 2017: 395). First, the cognitive part of teachers' attitudes is related to their knowledge of managing children with special educational needs (de Boer et al., 2011), lesson planning (Kuhl et al., 2013: 3). Secondly, the emotional component concerns the possible fear they may feel about implementing inclusion (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013) while the behavioral component of attitudes includes the expected personal willingness and ability to participate in co-education (Seifried & Heyl, 2016). Indeed, positive attitudes are associated with positive emotions and a spirit of support for children with special educational needs (Schmidt & Vrhovnik, 2015), while negative attitudes are manifested by fear, anxiety,

hesitation in the implementation of inclusive practices as well as inappropriate behaviors (McHatton & Parker, 2013).

Concerning to the second important variable, teacher self-efficacy, relates to teachers' beliefs about their abilities in planning and planning the curriculum and in implementing strategies (Guskey, 2012:52), thereby affecting student performance (Fackler & Malmberg, 2016; Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2018). Teachers who possess a high sense of self-efficacy operate showing greater sensitivity and understanding of the mistakes and weaknesses of their students (Chesnut & Burley, 2015), while they possess less anxiety (Fackler & Malmberg, 2016) and more optimism (Nurlu, 2015: 21-40), involve their students more in the learning process, reinforcing in this way, "circularly", their sense of efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). On the contrary, teachers with low self-efficacy beliefs set low goals (Ross & Bruce, 2007), are reluctant and indecisive (Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012), possessed by job stress (Klassen, Bong, Usher, Chong, Huan, Wong, & Georgiou, 2009), and do not feel satisfied with their profession (De Neve, Devos, & Tuytens, 2015).

The study of the relevant literature led us to extract contradictory data. In particular, several studies concluded the prevalence of positive attitudes among teachers toward inclusive education (Hellmich et al., 2019; Saloviita & Consegna's, 2019; Štemberger & Kiswarday, 2018; Barnová, 2022). Still, other research showed that many teachers are not so positive about the idea of inclusion (Krischler & Pit-ten Cate, 2019; Kofidou et al, 2017; Sanagi, 2016) while in others the teachers did not take a clear position on the matter (Alnahdi & Schwab, 2021; Heyder et al., 2020; Moti et al., 2016; Yada et al., 2022).

Based on research findings, teachers' sense of self-efficacy affects the quality of instruction provided (Zee, 2016) and inclusive classroom management (Chambers & Forlin, 2021). Teachers' willingness for differentiated instruction (Weiss, Lerche, Muckenthaler, Heimlich & Kiel, 2019) as well as the absence of referring students to special education programs (Yada, Leskinen, et al., 2022) are related to school environments where the teachers have a sense of higher efficacy. Some research that has been done resulting in a reduced sense of self-efficacy of teachers and high levels of anxiety regarding the implementation of inclusive education (Payne-van Staden, 2015; Yada & Savolainen, 2017).

Both teachers' attitudes and sense of self-efficacy are influenced by several factors.

Gender

On the one hand, researchers have documented the prevalence of positive attitudes toward inclusion among women (Schwab, 2018; Alnahdi et al., 2019; Alasim & Paul, 2019) in relation with men (Saloviita & Schaffus, 2016; Chung et al, 2015). On the other hand, other researches came to opposite findings where male teachers were more positive towards inclusion (Sharma, Shaikat & Furlonger, 2014; Bhatnagar & Das, 2014). Of course, other research concluded that gender does not have a significant effect on teachers' attitudes (Guillemot, Lacroix & Nocus, 2022; Alnahdi & Schwab, 2021; Singh, Kumar, Panchal & Singh, 2020; Radojlovic et al., 2022).

Regarding teachers' sense of self-efficacy, several studies have recorded a higher degree of perceived self-efficacy for female teachers (Schwab, 2018; Specht & Metsala, 2018: 67-82; San Martin et al., 2021), while the opposite were the results from other researches (Gkolia, Dimitrios & Koustelios, 2015; Tsakiridou & Polyzopoulou, 2014; Dukmak et al., 2019) where it was found that male teachers had higher beliefs regarding the management of problematic behaviors and the motivation of students practices they used about their female colleagues. Other researches were recorded where no significant difference was found in teachers' sense of self-efficacy between men and women (Desombre et al., 2019; Yada & Savolainen, 2017; Alnahdi & Schwab, 2021).

Teaching experience

In addition, teachers' teaching experience was found to be positively related to the attitudes they develop (Ćwirynkało et al., 2017; Odo et al., 2021; Palavan et al. 2018). Of course, in other studies contradictory findings were found (Yada & Savolainen, 2017; Vaz et al., 2015; Asres, 2019) while other research showed the absence of an effect of teaching experience on teachers' attitudes (Galovic et al., 2014; Štemberger & Kiswarday, 2017; Alnahdi & Schwab, 2021; Gebhardt et al., 2015).

In addition, several studies find a connection of more years of teacher experience with a higher sense of self-confidence in teaching in an inclusive school (Monteiro, Kuok, Correia, Forlin & Teixeira, 2018; George, Richardson & Watt, 2018). Educators with previous experience with students with disabilities also reported higher levels of educational self-efficacy (Specht & Metsala, 2018; Özokcu, 2017; Peebles & Mendaglio, 2014; Mohamed Emam & Al-Mahdy, 2020). On the contrary, in a study by Toy & Duru (2016), the level of self-efficacy of younger teachers was higher than the level of more experienced teachers, while in a study by Suprayogi et al. (2017), more experienced teachers (over 20 years) were more resistant to changes that required the development of new skills. Nevertheless, research has been conducted where no statistically significant effect of the teaching experience of students with special needs on their self-efficacy in terms of teaching and learning was found (Chao, Chow, Forling & Ho, 2017).

Previous contact

Also, previous contact with people with disabilities positively influenced their attitudes toward inclusion (Alnahdi & Schwab, 2021; Parey, 2019; Vasiliadis, Koutra & Dimitriadou, 2021).

In research (Yakut, 2021; Sharma, Shaukat & Furlonger, 2014; Boujut, Popa-Roch, Palomares, Dean, & Cappe, 2017; Koh et al, 2019; Devi & Ganguly, 2022), it was found that teachers with experience in structures of special education and with personal experience with people with special educational needs reported a higher level of self-efficacy regarding teaching in inclusive settings. Of course, in a study by Schwab et al. (2018) and Alnahdi & Schwab (2021), contact with people with disabilities did not seem to have any effect on teachers' sense of self-efficacy.

Type of disability

Another factor that appears to influence teachers' attitudes is the degree and type of disability and/or special educational needs of students. In particular, researches by Lindner et al (2023), Eichfeld & Algermissen, (2016), Parey (2019), Pappas, Papoutsi & Drigas (2018) found that students with severe and complex needs (brain/neurological disorders, autism spectrum disorders or behavioral difficulties) were a significant challenge to deal with about children with physical, sensory and mild cognitive disabilities.

According to Schwab et al (2019), the type of student disability affects the increase or decrease of teachers' self-efficacy. Students' severe educational needs negatively affected teachers' sense of self-efficacy (Anglim et al., 2019; Yada & Savolainen, 2019).

Age

The age of teachers is another parameter that affects the formation of attitudes. In particular, research (Galaterou & Antoniou, 2017; Saloviita & Schaffus, 2016; Saloviita, 2020:64-73; Barnová, 2022; Kazanopoulos, 2022; Sanmartin et al, 2021) concluded that younger teachers are more positive. However, in a study by Avramidis et al (2019), teachers aged 50 and over were found to be more positive than younger teachers, while in a study by Radojlovic et al. (2022) found no correlation between teachers' age with their attitude.

Concerning to self -efficacy, some research results in a higher sense of efficacy of younger teachers (Tsakiridou & Polyzopoulou, 2014; Urton, Wilbert & Hennemann, 2014), while other researchers concluded that older teachers proved to be more effective in engaging students (Gkolia et al, 2015; Motallebzadeh, Ashraf & Yazdi, 2014). Thus, in a study by Antoniou, Geralexis & Charitaki (2017) the existence of a significant correlation of the same variables was not seen.

Training

First, research has shown the positive effect of teacher training on their attitudes to accommodate students with special educational needs/disability in their classrooms (Woodcock & Hardy, 2017; Sharma & Nuttal, 2016; Crispel & Kasperski, 2019; Avramidis & Toulia, 2020; Aldossari, 2022; Parey, 2019; Štemberger & Kiswarday, 2018). Of course, research have been conducted that came to opposite results (Štemberger & Kiswarday, 2018); Sokal & Katz, 2017; Orakci et al., 2016).

Several studies conclude on the positive correlation of training in special education with the degree of self-efficacy for the inclusion of students with special educational needs (Sharma, Shaukat & Furlonger, 2014; Taliaferro, Hammond & Wyant, 2015; Matić, Škrbić, Kerkez & Veselinović, 2022; Wray, Sharma & Subban, 2023).

At that point it is necessary to mention the connection between the two concepts and to cite relevant research. Both concepts are related to successful inclusive practices (Sharma & Nuttal, 2016). Attitudes are the main predictor of teacher self-efficacy (Pit-ten Cate & Glock, 2018; Schwab, 2018) which in turn predicts teachers' use of inclusive education practices (Schwab & Alnahdi, 2020; Hellmich, Löper & Görel 2019), being one of the main building factors of inclusive education (Avramidis & Toulia, 2020; Moberg et al., 2020). It is commonly accepted that the connection of teachers' attitudes toward the inclusion of students with special educational needs in their classroom with how effective they feel in engaging in inclusive practice (Yada et al. 2022; Frumos, 2018; San Martin et al., 2021). Conversely, other research such as Vaz et al. (2015), Dukmak et al. (2019) and Savolainen et al. (2020) concluded the effect of teachers' self-efficacy on their attitudes towards inclusion. In other words, teachers who feel competent about teaching students with special educational needs also have more positive attitudes about inclusion. Of course, there have been records in the international literature and research that establish the weak correlation between teachers' self-efficacy attitudes and beliefs. In particular, a study by Sharma et al (2014) found a negative correlation between the attitudes of potential teachers and their self-efficacy beliefs, with teachers with more positive attitudes having low levels of educational self-efficacy in teaching students with disabilities and vice versa. Similar research concluded the

weak relationship between attitudes and self-efficacy (Wood, 2017; Carew et al., 2019), indicating these two concepts as divergent (Saloviita, 2015).

The research questions posed are as follows:

1. What are the attitudes of primary school teachers towards the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream schools?
2. How do teachers rate their degree of effectiveness in participatory practice? (Study in three axes: a) in the teaching strategies they apply, b) in classroom management, c) in the involvement of students during the learning process)?
3. Is teachers' self-efficacy related to their attitudes towards inclusive education?
4. Which factors (professional expertise and training in special education, work experience, gender, age, type of special educational needs, previous experience in teaching children with special educational needs) influence their attitudes and the assessment of teachers' sense of self-efficacy in inclusive practice?

The importance of conducting this work lies in the determining importance of teachers' attitudes and their self-efficacy for the successful implementation of inclusive education policies. Given the lack of research related to the subject in general primary education teachers mainly in Greece, this research aims to contribute to the enrichment of the literature with new research data. The results could be useful for improving teacher training programs as well as educational services provided to students with special needs.

II. Methodology

Sample and research tool

The approach followed in the research was quantitative using a questionnaire on a sample of 98 primary education teachers. Research was conducted in the regional unit of Attica. In this particular research, the questionnaire allows the collection of measurable data and the formulation of conclusions for a large part of the population (Creswell, 2011). Data was analyzed with "SPSS Statistics, 26.00".

Of the participants, 11 were men (11.2%), 87 were women (88.8%). In terms of age, a large part, 79 of them, belonged to the age category under 35 years (80.6%), while 19 teachers answered from the age of 36 and over (19.4%). Also, 57 of them (58.5%) stated that they work as general education teachers, while the remaining 41 (41.8%) are in special education. Also, 38 of the respondents did not have any relevant specialization in the field of Special Education, while the remaining 60 teachers had a corresponding specialization. Regarding their educational experience, 71 teachers (72.4%) had experience from 0-4 years, while 27 teachers had educational experience from 5 years or more (27.5%). In addition, 16 participants stated that there is a disabled child in their family (16.3%), whereas 82 teachers said that they don't have or have ever had a student with Special Educational Needs or a disability in their class (83.7%).

The sample was selected by stratified sampling to ensure its representativeness. To answer these research questions, a questionnaire consisting of 44 closed-ended questions was created, while data was taken from the Static scales (Scale of Teachers Attitudes towards Inclusive Classrooms) related to the attitudes of primary school teachers towards student participation with disabilities in the school environment and the Oste scale (Ohio State teacher efficacy scale) to assess the teaching self-efficacy of teachers. The first seven are about demographics and the remaining 37 questions are about teachers' attitudes and confidence level using Likert-type scales. The researcher assured the participants of maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of the research data.

The statements of the second section of the questionnaire fall into the following categories: a) teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, b) advantages of inclusion, c) preconditions for inclusion, d) nature of special educational needs, e) educational practices of inclusion and f) support-collaboration. the third section includes the following categories: a) teachers' self-efficacy in student involvement, b) teachers' self-efficacy in teaching children with SEN, c) teachers' self-efficacy in managing an inclusive class, d) type of special educational needs, e) sense of self-efficacy in collaboration with parents, colleagues, other professionals.

Statistical analysis- issues of credibility and validity

In our research, descriptive statistical analysis was used which included variation of quantitative variables (mean value, standard deviation, minimum and maximum value). Dependent variables of this research are attitudes and self-efficacy and independent variables are gender, age, specialization in Special Education, educational experience, work in special or general education and the existence of a disabled child in their family or class. Concerning the independent variable, gender has two values, since the answers are male and female. The variable of age has two subcategories (under 35 years old, 36 years and older). The variable of their work in special or general education takes only these two values. In the case of specialization in Special Education, there were two subcategories (yes, no). The variable of educational experience also takes two values (up to 4 years, above 5 years). Regarding the last two variables, both of them take two values (yes/no).

In addition, statistical techniques of inductive statistics were used. More specifically, to check the relationships of attitude and self-efficacy with the demographic characteristics of the participants (gender, age, work in special or general education, previous service, training, existence of a disabled child in the family or the class) the statistical criterion of the analysis of variance was used towards one factor (One-Way ANOVA) to establish the statistically significant differences of the overall index of attitudes and self-efficacy respectively for each of the above variables (Katsis, Sideridis & Embalotis, 2010).

The significance level (p-value) was two-sided and it was defined as $p < 0.05$ (5%). Two-tailed tests are more common in research (Yockey, 2018:121) and are used to evaluate whether a variable (i.e. gender) affects another one (i.e. sense of self -efficacy).

Internal consistency and validity

Internal consistency reliability was checked with Cronbach's α coefficient, which in the second section of the questionnaire was 0.801 while in the third section, it was 0.930, values that also show the high reliability and validity of the questionnaire.

Regarding the validity of the questionnaire, an attempt was made to ensure the construction and use of the appropriate research instrument, which was pilot -tested on teachers to see if it was suitable for the sample, but also by selecting a representative sample of 98 teachers, which should not be too large either not too small either (Cohen et al., 2008: 195-196).

III. Results

Attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education

The neutral attitude of teachers toward inclusive education was found based on the total index of attitudes ($M=2,41$). Specifically, teachers were marginally negative/almost neutral on the first subscale (Teachers' Attitudes to Inclusion)($M= 1,42$), marginally positive on the second subscale (Advantages of Inclusion)($M= 2,61$), on the third subscale their attitudes were marginally positive (Conditions of Inclusion), on fourth (Nature of special educational needs)($2,73$) and fifth (Educational practices of inclusion) subscales were positive ($3,27$) while neutral attitudes were reported regarding the sixth subscale (Supportive environment)($2,34$). Also, based on the table of percentages of positive and negative attitudes towards the inclusion of students with disabilities, it was concluded that teachers were more positive about teaching students with learning difficulties (98%), they considered the appropriate training of teachers to be of utmost importance to accommodate students with special educational needs in the classes (98%) as well as cooperation with the students' parents (98%). Also, teachers appeared less favorable in terms of teaching students with severe mental retardation (32.7%).

Factors affecting teachers' attitudes

Regarding the factors influencing teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, no statistically significant difference was found.

Teachers' views on their self-efficacy

Based on the total index of teachers' self-efficacy ($M=0.45$) the teachers' low confidence in themselves to undertake an inclusive classroom is extracted. In detail, it was found that teachers have a low sense of self-efficacy in terms of student activity ($M=0.60$), in the use of educational strategies ($M=0.85$), depending on the severity of special educational needs ($M= 0.22$), in the management of the inclusive classroom ($M=0.29$) as well as in the ability to collaborate ($M= 0.99$).

Also, based on the table of percentages of low and high self-efficacy of teachers, their high confidence was found regarding the effort they make to make students appreciate the value of learning (99%) and to make them understand the expected results of their behavior (100%). In contrast, a large part of the participants (76.3%) expressed the highest percentage of low self-confidence regarding the frustration they experience when teaching students with special educational needs.

Factors affecting teachers' sense of self-efficacy

Regarding the factors influencing teachers' sense of self-efficacy towards inclusion, no statistically significant difference was found.

The relationship between teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy in inclusion

Using the Pearson Correlation r technique, an attempt was made to identify the relationship and magnitude of the relationship of the above variables based on their overall index. Thus, it was found that there is no statistically significant relationship between teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and the confidence they

have in themselves ($p=0.07$). In other words, any teachers' attitudes towards inclusion appear to be unrelated to the confidence they feel to meet the demands of inclusion.

Then, with the use of the same statistical criterion, the degrees of correlation of the teachers' attitudes and sense of effectiveness towards the different types of educational needs were examined. Thus, it was the existence of statistically significant, strong, positive relationships between teachers' attitudes toward inclusion and their sense of self-efficacy for all types of special educational needs except for students with behavioral problems ($p=0.017>0.001$). Therefore, we understand that the more positive educators are toward inclusion, the more they believe in their ability to respond to each type of educational need. In addition, attitudes were correlated with the subscales of self-efficacy in student engagement, use of educational strategies, classroom management, collaboration, where no statistically significant relationship was found. Well, teachers' attitudes towards the idea of inclusion seem to have nothing to do with how effective teachers feel in engaging students, using appropriate strategies, managing the classroom, and working with parents and professionals.

IV. Conclusion

At this point, we can conclude the neutrality teachers maintain regarding inclusion as well as their low sense of self-efficacy to engage in the implementation of inclusive practices. Research such as Lindner et al (2023) and Avramidis et al. (2019) also found teachers' neutral attitudes towards inclusive education. Specifically, regarding their attitudes toward inclusive education, the teachers expressed their concerns regarding the educational inclusion of students with more serious difficulties that they will likely face in their classrooms. This finding is in agreement with research by Lee et al. (2015), where teachers are positive towards certain categories of students.

In addition, teachers seem to believe in the effectiveness of co-education of children with and without special educational needs, a conclusion reached by research by McCarty (2006), who argues that the inclusion of children in standard school allow all students with special educational needs or without interacting with their classmates, forming friendships and developing their social skills. Moreover, an important point agreed upon by several participants was the lack of qualified staff while they questioned the adequacy of the relevant training they have received. The investigations of Chondrobilas & Giavrimis (2019) and Kountouriotou (2016) confirm the above findings pointing out the necessity of training teachers to become effective in the educational process. Also, in research by Page, Berman & Serow (2020) and Hoadjli & LaTrache (2020), teachers' positive attitudes towards inclusion are based on both their abilities and the training they have received to meet the needs of students. Additionally, our research came to the importance of crowds of students studying in a class for the effective implementation of inclusive programs, a finding that has been reached by researchers such as Alquraini (2012). Another extremely important factor for the successful implementation of inclusion, as shown by our research, is the cooperation of teachers with parents of students. The importance of school and family collaboration regarding the inclusion of students with special educational needs has been highlighted by research by Reed, Osborne & Waddington (2013), as this will optimize student learning and the development of their capabilities.

Regarding the sense of confidence in themselves to engage in inclusive practices, the low sense of self-efficacy of the interviewed teachers was evident. In particular, the participating teachers do not feel competent in the involvement of students in the educational process as well as in the management of the inclusive class, while they believe that they can do better in the use of teaching strategies and in their collaboration with colleagues, parents, and other professionals. These results are confirmed by Yada & Savolainen (2017), where teachers showed a low sense of effectiveness regarding the implementation of inclusive practices in their classrooms. In addition, teachers appear more confident to teach students with mental retardation, visual impairments, hearing impairments, motor impairments, learning disabilities, mental disorders, behavioral problems, but not students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and autism. Indeed, in research by Leonard & Smyth (2022), negative or neutral attitudes towards the inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorder were found, as by Hong et al. (2020), educators argued that inclusion would not be beneficial for students with autism.

Regarding the factors that influence the formation of teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy, the analysis of our research did not show the variables such as gender, age, the teachers' work in special or general education, the specialization they have received in special education, their previous educational experience and the existence of a disabled child in the family or the class affect the attitudes they develop towards the institution of inclusion nor how effective they feel to teach in a co-educational class. These findings are consistent with several studies where the effect of gender (Singh, Kumar, Panchal & Singh, 2020), age (Radojlovic et al. (2022), specialization in special education (Bansal (2016), educational pre-service Paramanik, Barman & Barman (2018) as well as previous contact with people with disabilities (Alnahdi & Schwab, 2021) on the attitudes teachers develop towards inclusion.

Regarding teachers' sense of self-efficacy, several studies agree with the findings of our research. Particularly, the effect of gender (Rezaeian & Abdollahzadeh, 2020), age (Antoniou et al., 2017), teachers' experience with students with special needs (Chao, Chow, Forling & Ho, 2017), teachers' experience (Chao, Forling & Ho (2016) on how effective teachers feel to teach students in inclusive classrooms has not been detected.

Some minor differences were found and will be mentioned below. Specifically, younger teachers appeared more positive to include students with mild mental retardation in their classes. Several other investigations, it was found that younger teachers feel slightly more positive towards the inclusion of students with special educational needs about their older colleagues (Ahmmed, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2014; Saloviita, 2018). Also, teachers working in special education settings were slightly more positive about co-educating students with autism with their peers while recognizing the social benefits of inclusive education. Indeed, teachers with previous experience in teaching students with SEN have more positive attitudes toward the inclusion of students in regular classrooms compared to educators who had never had experience with students with disabilities in their general classroom (Parey, 2019; Vasiliadis, Koutra & Dimitriadou, 2021). In addition, male teachers were slightly more positive about the necessity of attending children with disabilities or with special educational needs in special schools or integration classes. Similarly research by Alghazo & Naggar Gaad (2004) and Alquraini (2012) showed more positive attitudes of male teachers compared to female.

Regarding teachers' self-efficacy, older teachers, those who serve in special education structures and with relevant expertise appeared with more faith in themselves in terms of their ability to accommodate students with disabilities in the classroom. In research proved that older teachers were also more effective (Gkolia et al, 2015; Ekins et al., 2016). In fact, in research by Shaukat et al.(2013) and Malinen et al (2013), teaching experience in teaching children with special needs proved to be an important factor in shaping their self-efficacy. In addition to experience with students in this category, an important factor influencing how effective teachers feel is the relevant training they have received. In other words, trained teachers about special learning needs reported higher levels of self-efficacy (Corona, Christodulu, & Rinaldi, 2017; Özokcu, 2018). Another factor that was found to be of catalytic importance in the formation of the feeling of self-efficacy in teachers regarding the implementation of the inclusive ideal is the previous contact with people with special needs. In research (Yakut, 2021; Koh et al, 2019), it was found that teachers with experience in special education structures and with personal experience with people with special educational needs reported a higher level of self-efficacy regarding teaching in inclusive settings.

A key factor we found to influence both teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy towards inclusion is the type of special educational needs of students. Serious difficulties are not welcomed by teachers, a finding that agrees with research by Ćwirynkało et al. (2017) where teachers were accepting of teaching students with mild to moderate disabilities, with reservations for more severe problems. Existing literature confirms the effect that the type and severity of students' special educational needs have on increasing or decreasing teacher self-efficacy (Schwab, 2018). Specifically, in research by Anglim et al. (2019) participating teachers did not feel confident in managing autistic students while a research by Sawyer et al. (2018) found that students' behavioral problems inhibit their sense of efficacy.

Overall, it is impossible to draw a safe conclusion regarding the relationship between teachers' attitudes and perceived self-efficacy.

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